

From the Desk of the Editor

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, currently operates within the framework of a strategic concept that was agreed upon in 1999. Since then, the challenges faced by NATO have changed dramatically. The terrorist attacks of 9/11, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a shift from conventional to asymmetric warfare, NATO's ongoing enlargement, new developments in communication technologies, and a re-assertive Russia have all played a role in changing the paradigms of the strategic partnership. Accordingly, NATO is now taking stock to re-articulate itself with a new Strategic Concept. In this issue of TPQ, we take a look at what this re-imagining of the Alliance will look like. We also are reminded of what is *not* changing – why NATO is still indispensable. In his article, Supreme Allied Commander Admiral James Stavridis underlines the perseverance of NATO's values and resolve on “the long road to peace, security, and prosperity.”

For the first time in NATO's history, the publics of NATO Allies and Partners have been included in the debate about the course NATO should steer in the years ahead. In her article for this issue, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy Stefanie Babst gives a detailed overview of this interactive process. We as TPQ are proud to have also taken part in some of the forums and debates she describes.

The emphasis placed by NATO throughout this process on reaching out to younger generations, utilizing media tools, and incorporating a gender perspective into the debate about NATO's future has rendered TPQ enthusiastic and well-positioned to play a role in the process. In this issue of TPQ, we maintain our traditional focus on Turkey's neighborhood as we explore different viewpoints and expectations concerning NATO's future.

In May 2010, the report prepared by the 12 person Group of Experts, which was chaired by former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on how the Alliance can “adapt to the 21st century” was released. The prescriptions of this report will be taken into account by NATO policymakers in the preparations for the November 2010 Lisbon Summit, which is expected to herald a new Strategic Concept. Jamie Shea, Director of Policy Planning in the Private Office of the NATO Secretary General, reflects on the complex considerations and strategic thinking involved in coming up with an innovative new Strategic Concept for the Alliance at this time. There are no easy answers to some of the questions he poses, such as “does Article 5 potentially apply to non-conventional incidents such as terrorism, or cyber attacks or energy cut offs?”

With 28 member states in the Alliance, there are 28 different historical, cultural, and geostrategic realities to be taken into consideration when formulating joint policies. Moreover, increased public scrutiny and empowerment of the individual requires that not only governments, but entire societies need to be on board with NATO's vision and actions. While accommodating different perspectives is crucial, too much divergence within NATO about how to deal with various security challenges can cause skepticism

among Allies about whether NATO can be trusted to protect them, and strike a blow to the deterrence capacity of the bloc.

Questions relating to enlargement –an issue elaborated on in this issue by Vahit Erdem– and the related issue of how to deal with Russia, have recently revealed divergences among the Allies. The August 2008 war between Georgia and Russia raised questions among observers in the Caucasus and in the Alliance about NATO’s resolve. Others saw this occasion as an opportunity for countries like Georgia to set their expectations at realistic levels, and for “the West” to tone down its ambitions. Mahir Zeynalov is of the latter conviction, while Carmen Gavrilla relates the importance Romania attributes to the ‘open doors’ policy. In the past couple of years, disillusionment has clearly spread among the strongest enthusiasts of Western engagement in the Caucasus. The dream that Turkey would be the gateway to the West for the Caucasus has been fading rapidly. Doubts that Turkey can strategically counterbalance Iran and Russia have increased with the perception that Turkey is not inclined, at least in the short term, to use its strategic capital towards empowering advocates of democracy or towards increased Transatlantic influence.

NATO’s out-of-area operations are an indication of the fact that it is increasingly difficult to draw a clear line between Euro-Atlantic security and international security. Canadian Defense Minister Peter MacKay uses Afghanistan to illustrate this point. The Halifax International Security Forum organized in a partnership by the Canadian Defense Ministry and the German Marshall Fund of the United States, which I had the privilege to attend last November, addressed how to “succeed” in Afghanistan and how to curb nuclearization in an atmosphere of “soul searching.” The need to scale down ambitions and set “credible goals” in this process was recognized.

Afghanistan is widely viewed as a litmus test for the credibility of not only NATO, but also the West, or the international community in general. In this issue, Baybars Örsek provides an update of the situation in Afghanistan today. The Afghanistan experience has also played an important role in shaping the understanding of the new security environment to which NATO needs to adapt. The importance, for example, of a comprehensive approach to security that involves coordination with other international organizations which can take the lead on civilian tasks such as development and state building is clear. Debates on reforming the UN and OSCE are thus also complementary to the debate about NATO’s future.

Turkey has been a NATO member since 1952, and prides itself on being the second largest military power in the Alliance, as well as a significant contributor to NATO operations. In this issue, Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül outlines Turkey’s approach to the various issues on NATO’s agenda, and argues that the end of the Cold War increased Turkey’s importance, opportunities and responsibilities.

However, support for NATO in Turkey has been on the decline. In the latest survey from the German Marshall Fund: Transatlantic Trends 2009, 35 percent of those surveyed opined that NATO is essential, a drop from 53 percent in 2004. Press coverage about

NATO –for which Nazife Ece provides a snapshot in this issue of TPQ– is generally superficial and riddled with pessimistic ideas.

NATO’s declining popularity in Turkey appears to be part of a larger trend of frustration with the West. It is a widespread assumption that the Transatlantic bloc has, since the turn of the century, become party to confrontations it can not win (i.e. Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Georgia). The persistence of regional deadlocks such as the Arab-Israeli conflict or the Nagorno-Karabagh stalemate fuels the perception of Western “double standards” in the implementation of values and principles. This skepticism about the West-dominated world order has allowed calls by Russia for an overhaul of the existing regional security architecture to have fallen on receptive ears. Turkey also, arguably, feels “taken for granted”. Resentment towards “the West” has been exacerbated by the perception of Turkey being excluded from the European Union. A tinge of self satisfaction is often thinly veiled within arguments on global shifts of demographic and economic centers of gravity, and accentuated with a newfound confidence that Turkey can reach new heights of power without being tied to the West. Turkey’s political leadership has in many cases stirred emotional reactionism rather than steering public debate to more solid foundations.

This situation was exacerbated on May 31st with what is commonly referred to as the “flotilla incident” in which nine of the Turks on board a Turkish ship headed to the Gaza strip were killed in clashes with Israeli commandos who boarded the ship in international waters. This incident added vengeance to the already emotionally charged debate in Turkish society about issues related to Israel. Justified criticism about the way Israel conducted the operation lost moral ground with the distasteful discourse, as well as platforms and partners used to deliver the message. Expressions of solidarity between Turkish political leaders and leaders from the region who advocate anti-Western ideologies and have terrible track records in terms of human rights, peaceful co-existence, and democratic values were showcased. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad underlined the “morality” that unites the two “brother nations.” Such pictures are particularly ironic in light of the once widespread expectation among liberals that the AKP government carry the torch of democratic values and tolerance in the Middle East.

Turkey’s traction in its neighborhood is indeed on the rise. Turkey offers many opportunities people of the region cannot find in their own countries. The spread of Turkish brands –be it an enterprising company or a captivating TV series– has also been a driving force in the turnaround of Turkey’s image in the Middle East. Turkish political leadership does not need to resort to populism to attract the interest or admiration of the “Arab street.” And it is certainly worth questioning whether Ankara really needs to make excuses for the human rights violations in countries of the region for Turkish businessmen to be able to get lucrative business deals from the respective governments...

The rhetoric of Turkish political leaders has by and large exacerbated the sense of the West being “other”. Furthermore, at critical junctures, Turkey has appeared to use its influence in the Middle East to pressure the West, whereas the expectation among Western enthusiasts of Turkey’s new regional power has been that Turkey would strengthen its credentials as a Western ally. There is an “experimental” flavor to foreign

policy debate in Turkey: it is at times overly theoretical, and other times ridden with emotional bias. Whether justified or not, the trust of Turkey's long-time allies has clearly been shaken and thus merits a strategic debate.

It is an important time for those who believe in NATO's utility to stand up for it in Turkey today. The political elite should not let NATO's accomplishments be forgotten. They should also be voicing their ideas as to how NATO's shortcomings can be overcome – not only behind closed doors, but including the public too. NATO is in the process of adapting to the changed global environment and will likely emerge from this period with regained credibility and strength. Turkey, as a NATO member, is a stakeholder in this transformation.

It is also important to realize that civilians increasingly have a say in how they are protected and from which “enemy.” Rather than bowing to conspiracies, more in our society should be encouraged to engage in ongoing debates about the future of our Alliance. We hope this issue of TPQ will make a contribution to this end, and we thank NATO's Public Diplomacy Division for their support.

TPQ continues to organize roundtable discussions with the support of the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation and enjoys ongoing partnership with the European Stability Initiative and *Hurriyet Daily News*.

We are grateful to Finansbank for sponsoring this issue of TPQ. We also appreciate the contributions of Tüpraş and HSBC to this issue, and the continuing support of Garanti Bank and Akbank.

As always, we look forward to your feedback.

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