

TURKEY AT THE BEGINNING OF MILLENNIUM III

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The end of the Cold War brought modifications over the Turkey’s status and regional agenda. Its geographical position, multiple historical connections, strategic power, etc. are some advantages supporting Turkey to become an ascending regional power. The impressive economic growth it has known in the last years is another element helping the development of this country to the status of regional power.

Known as a passing gate between Europe and Asia, Turkey rethought its external policy in terms of “zero problems with the neighbours” and “maximum cooperation and regional integration”.

Grounded on a recent bibliography and information on different accessed internet pages we will try to fulfil a brief overview of Turkey’s position at the beginning of the third millennium.

Keywords: security; regional power; neo-Ottomanism; threats; strategy of security.

Turkey – ascending regional power

Situated in South-Eastern of Europe and in South-Western Asia with exits to four seas (the Black Sea, the Marmora Sea, the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea), Turkey represents an important nodal point from geopolitical perspective owed to its relationships with regions of meaningful strategic value: the Southern Europe, the Central Asia, the Middle East, the Extreme Orient, the Russian Heartland.

Turkey’s role as regional power amplified after the end of the Cold War and the dissipation of the former USSR. The withdrawal of soviet power from the former countries of the Soviet Union, geographically laid in the Black Sea basin and in Central Asia was interpreted by Turkey as “an historical occasion to promote its economic, political and ideological interests”¹. A first step, in this direction, was constituted, in October 1992, by

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¹ Duygu Bazoglu Sezer, *Turkey in the post cold war era: Evolving Domestic and Foreign Policy trends and challenges*, in *The Southeast European year Book 1994-1995*, Hellenic

the closing in among the states speaking Turk language of an agreement in Ankara to form a new Turkic common market with free movement of merchandises and capitals. The euphoria did not last for long time because the Russian Federation immediately launched the "close vicinity" concept by signing the commerce agreement of Community of Independent States (CIS) and the agreement over the constitution of a radio and TV company of CIS member states. To those is also added the warning handed in to Ankara by the declaration of Marshal Şapoşnikov, Chief Comandant of CIS, wherein it showed that Turkey's involvement in Azeri enclave Nahicevan can lead to the burst of the World War III. After the Russian actions was clearly shaped the economic and military dependence of CIS member states from Russia is stronger then the historical or ethnical relations with Turkey.²

After 1990, Turkey's economy knew a positive trend becoming an important centre of economic power to the intersection between two continents (Europe and Asia), as follows: 4-5% (2000), 5.9% (2003), 9.9% (2004), 7.6% (2006), 5% (2007), 8.8% (the second trimester of 2011), 11% (the first trimester of 2012, overlapping China)³.

The economic boom of Turkey following the 2009 crisis is owed to the measures settled by the Turk government which granted fiscal stimulants to the consumer in order to increase their purchase power and diminished its public debt orienting the economy to the exports market.

In order to become one of the primary ten economies of the world and a political force on external plan, to Turkey, the participants in the debate organized in 2012 by Chatham House, the Londoner centre of research, were recommended a series of actions: a stronger education system; the production of goods with added value; the modification of the fiscal code to obtain consistent revenues and the increase of the intern saving rate in order to diminish the deficit of current account; the settlement of measures on political plan in order to confront the social consequences of riots from the Arabian world and of the financial crisis from the European Union.⁴

The country's economic growth allowed the diversification and multiplication of change and cooperation relations with different states and

Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, Athens, 1995, p.534, apud. Ştefan Georgescu, Maria Zidaru, *Conflicte interstatale în zona Caucazului*, Geopolitica Magazine no. 40 from 2011, TopForm Publishing House, Bucharest, p. 110.

² Ştefan Georgescu, Maria Zidaru, *Conflicte interstatale în zona Caucazului*, Geopolitica Magazine no. 40 from 2011, TopForm Publishing House, Bucharest, p. 111.

³ Source: <http://www.ziare.com/economie/crestere-economica/miracolul-economic-turcesc-continua-si-in-2012-1142668>, accessed on September 30,2012, 18.30 hour.

⁴ Source: <http://www.ziare.com/economie/crestere-economica/turcia-in-top-10-economii-ale-lumii-1190958> accessed on September 30,2012, 18.40 hour.

organizations in the European area (EU, OBSEC), Euro-Asian (Shanghai Cooperation Organization - SCO, D-8 – Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey) or Asiatic (Economic Cooperation Organization – Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan).

Although in the years passed from the Euro Zone creation Turkey had an impressive economic growth, the debts crisis manifesting in EU could have effects over its economic growth. The dependency is concluded by a social politician in Turkey sustaining that: *“What happens in Europe concerns also Turkey. If the European Union has got fever, Turkey is also ill because the both economies are interdependent”*⁵.

From military perspective, Turkey is a significant power in the region. Its military doctrine focuses on the sufficiency of troops, defence by own forces, territorial defence and pre-eminence of defence interests and needs, compared to the other types of interests. Turkey’s military strategy regards the following aspects: the deterrence of potential enemies by own capacities, collective security (in NATO and European Security and Defence Initiatives frameworks), advanced defence, active military participation in dealing and managing the area’s crises. The military budget of Turkey is estimated to be over 12 billions dollars⁶, at the disposal of a numerous army, very well endowed, respected around the country’s population and considered to be one of the best armies being part of the North-Atlantic Alliance (the second military force as size in NATO).

Turkey is a member state of some international and regional organizations, as follows: UN (founding member, 1945), NATO (since 1952), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (1973), the Islamic Conference Organization (1969) and Council of Europe (founding member, 1949), G-20 (1999), Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (1992). Turkey was the founder of Navy Force to the Black Sea formation (BLACKSEAFOR) as regional group in the security field (2001). From October 2008, Turkey was elected as non-permanent member of United Nations Security Council.

Although it has agreements with EU since 1963, barely on October 3, 2005 were opened the negotiations for EU adhesion after the resolution of two main issues: the signing in of the Protocol extending the Custom Union to the ten new Member States, here being also enclosed Cyprus, and the reform

⁵ Source: <http://www.business24.ro/articole/economie+turcia>, accessed on October 10, 2012, 15.10 hour.

⁶ Source: <http://www.rumaniamilitary.ro/tag/turcia-mare-putere-militara>, accessed on October 8, 2012, 21.05 hour.

of the Penal Code following the requirement asserted by Brussels by which are requested guarantees over the respect of minorities and human rights.⁷

The Conference with theme *Turkey – key toward the future of Europe*, organized by the European Institute in Romania, in June 2010⁸, concluded by Turkey's accession, „the European Union will make itself a service allowing the diversification of energetic transport routes and the energetic security provision of the continent.

A Turkey member of EU will not endanger the actual status quo and will contribute to the increase of political influence, military power and prosperity of the European project. In exchange, Turkey's rejection by the EU would lead to the abandonment of its occidental aspirations and will reduce the range of Union's manoeuvre in the Muslim space. An EU non-integrated Turkey will have less to win in the actual order of the international system and could become one of the states undermining the actual status quo”.

Turkey, being aware of demographical, economic, cultural and geopolitical advantages, „it does not see as a state to the limit of Europe, tasked to defend the Occident's interests in one of the most troubled regions of the world”, but is considered itself „a central country able to define itself the vision and interests”⁹.

The analysts consider this country would not adhere earlier than 2015, because of its numerous economic and social reforms to be done.¹⁰ The presentation of Turkey position as ascending regional power can not be complete without the circumstantiation of some data about the internal political scene dominated in the last ten years by the Justice Party or AKP, leaded by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who gave a new impulse to the state founded by Atatürk.

The Justice Party succeeded by the settled actions and measures to maintain in front of Turks preferences, particularly because it gave stability to the internal policy, until then fragmented and often marked by military *coups d'état*, and for the impressive economic growth. The Justice Party benefited also by Turkey's geostrategic position which makes it an important nod to diversify the energy sources to Europe. Turkey's position at the intersection

⁷ Elena Burcioaga, *Aderarea Turciei sau lungul drum spre Europa*, available on <http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/120-121-122/art10-burcioaga.html>, accessed on October 6, 2012, 19.30 hours.

⁸ Source: <http://civitaspolitics.org/2010/07/02/uniunea-europeana-si-turcia-incotro/>, accessed on September 30, 2012, 18.45 hours.

⁹ Ionuț Constantin, *Criza economică și evoluțiile internaționale contemporane. Cine are de câștigat?*, Geopolitica Magazine no. 43 from 2011, TopForm Publishing House, Bucharest, p. 168.

¹⁰ Stan Petrescu, *Călătorii geopolitice. Lumea văzută de la București*, Military Publishing House, 2010, p. 70.

between the Orient provider of energy and the Occident dependent of energy determined the increase of Ankara authorities influence in the late years. For example, Nabucco European gas duct designed to bring gases from the Caucasian zone toward Europe by-passing Russia, will cross over Turkey territory, while the South Stream rival project, following to base on Russian gas, in order to by-pass Ukraine, needs the accord of Ankara authorities to bring the gas duct under the Black Sea, in the territorial waters of Turkey.¹¹

We can conclude Turkey's importance by geopolitical and geo-economic regard amplified in the late decades from the following reasons: the conjugation of global energetic crisis with the beginning of the valuation of promising potential of Caspian Sea resources; the Islamic space has appreciatively 3/4 of the world's oil and gases reserves distributed in the Caspian Sea and Middle East regions disputed by USA – China – Russia triad; the Turkish territory can provide the hydro-carbonates transport in security conditions from the exploitation areas (Caspian Basin, Siberia, Gulf) toward the beneficiaries from Europe, Asia, the Far East and USA, by the help of oil tanks by straits, or by network of oil ducts and gas ducts with terminals to the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, in South or South-East.¹²

A new dimension of Turkish foreign policy: neo-Ottomanism

Turkey, by leaning well history's lessons, as is shown in a recent article in Project Syndicate in regard to which the compass of the Turkish government indicates only a single good direction to be taken into account: „zero problems with the neighbours”¹³, proposed itself to become regional leader in South Caucasus and to become one of the great players of the world.

“Zero problems” policy recommended by Ahmet Davutoglu, the Turkish foreign minister, „it is not universally available”.¹⁴ The closeness to Armenia or relations with Israel did not reach the aforementioned paradigm. In 2010, the Security Council of Turkey made a series of modifications in the National Defence Strategy; for example, there were excluded from the groups of states representing a potential danger against Ankara: Iran, Syria, Bulgaria, as well as two former soviet republics (Armenia and Georgia); Russia and

¹¹ Cristina Dobreanu, *Turcia și noul otomanism*, article available

<http://www.revista22.ro/articol.php?id=11891>, accessed on October 12, 2012, 14.40 hour.

¹² Vasile Nazare, *Turcia și jocurile de putere din bazinul Mării Negre*, articol publicat în *Geopolitica Magazine* no. 25 from 2008, TopForm Publishing House, Bucharest, p. 114.

¹³ Source: <http://www.ziare.com/articole/politica+externa+turcia>, accessed on October 6, 2012, 20.15 hours.

¹⁴ Kerem Öktem, *Lumea Turciei*, interview of Octavian Manea, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, march-april 2011, p. 60.

Israel, former strategic and commercial partners, were put on the list with potential enemies of Turkey.

Under the leadership of premier Erdoğan and teacher Ahmet Davutoglu, the architect of the new foreign policy, Turkey looks to prove it has the diplomatic, cultural, economic instruments needed for the peaceful "retaking" of former ottoman provinces. At this concern, it is manifesting a new dimension of Turkey's foreign policy: *neo-Ottomanism*.

The foreign policy of Turkey has as goals regional peace, stability and prosperity and the neo-Ottomanism term describing the new dimension of Turkish foreign policy „is just a consequence of cooperation potential rediscovery among countries sharing a common history and culture”¹⁵.

The foreign and economic policy of Turkey do not limit to the former ottoman territories, Turkey being very active in the "Arabian Spring", but also in Libya's stabilization. Also, many African states registered a growth of political, economic and educational presence of Turkey; Turkey's embassies opened in all Asia; Turkish Airlines has flights in countries as Cambodia and Vietnam, this being an important indicator of significant economic relations; in the Western Balkans, the number of cultural centres financed by turkey is increasing etc.¹⁶

Neo-Ottomanism origins in pan-Turkism, by the engagements assumed to the countries wherein there existed an ottoman presence and to the countries of Muslim (Sunni) majority¹⁷. The pan-Turkism militated for the union of all the Turkish peoples (Turks, Azeri, Kazaks, Turkmen, Uzbeks, Kirghiz, Ugric, Tatars, Gagauz, etc.) in a single state entity– Turkistan, which aimed the region from the Central Asia between Siberia, in North, and Tibet, India, Afghanistan and Iran, in South, laying on about 2,600,000 km², with two divisions: Western Turkistan or Russian Turkistan (corresponding to the present territories of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan states and the southern parts of Kazakhstan) and Eastern Turkistan or Chinese Turkistan (the present autonomous region Xinjiang).

Pan-Turkism was created by the Turk originated' intellectuals from Russia, the ideologist of this movement being the Turk minister or war Ismail Enver Paşa (1881-1922) and had a peculiar growth in the period of the

¹⁵ *Foreign Policy Magazine*, iulie-august 2011, article Puterea regională, interview of Octavian Manea, p. 49.

¹⁶ Kerem Öktem, researcher to European Studies Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford University, cited in *Foreign Policy Magazine* march/april 2011, article „Lumea Turciei”, interview of Octavian Manea, p. 61.

¹⁷ Nicolae Țibrigan, *Revirimentul Turciei. Între panturcism și neo-otomanism*, available on-line on <http://www.geopolitics.ro/geopolitica/panisme/3213.html>, accessed on October 6, 2012, 21.05 hours.

Russian Civil War (1918-1922), in the context when Turkey represented the pillar of German geopolitics in the Balkan-Caucasian-Black Sea space. The idea is abandoned following the fail while the war.

Along the presidency of Kemal Atatürk (1923-1938), Turkey renounced to any reference to pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism adopting a neutrality policy. The pan-Turkism reactivation is retaken between 1941-1943 years having as premise the involvement of Turkey in the war against USSR taking part of the old ally. The end of the Cold War and USSR collapse bring a real rebirth of pan-Turkism in Turkey, but also in Azerbaijan and Crimea, rising worry in the Russian Federation because of the demographical dynamics in the regarded regions of Turkic population. By its foreign policy, indifferently the manifestation dimensions, Turkey wants to become a status quo power in the Islamic world; therefore, it will use all the instruments it has to create vector in the third directions: Balkans, Caucasus and Middle East.

Also, Turkey has, in regard to its foreign minister, the capacity to help the European Union to obtain a bigger role on the international scene and in the realization of its internal and external goals. The integration in EU will remain the strategic goal of Turkey.¹⁸

Conclusions

The geographical position, neighbored by region engaged in diverse conflicts in Caucasus, Balkans and Middle East, its geographical interests in the Caucasian region, and the close connection with the countries speaking Russian language from the Southern part of the Russian Federation, etc. there are advantages making from turkey a key-country in Europe's security. We can also add Turkey plays important role in any policy to the Black Sea of the United States of America or the North-Atlantic Alliance.

Turkey, „*the hot nut from EU pocket*”¹⁹, is the eldest official candidate to the European Union. Considered rather an Asian than a European country and, because its predominant religion is Muslim, the great European powers postponed the Turkey's getting near the European Community.

Turkey wants to get a pivotal position in Balkans, and therefore, it aims to extend its political and economic policy in the entire region of the Balkans. By taking, in 2010, the presidency of the Ministerial Committee session of the Council of Europe, Turkey proposed to put all the efforts to retransform the Council of Europe in an international platform and to include, among the priorities, the fight against discrimination, xenophobia and racism.

¹⁸ Foreign Policy Magazine july-august 2011, p. 50.

¹⁹ Stan Petrescu, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

The Ankara authorities considers the political regional are crucial for stability, and therefore Turkey will contribute to the peaceful development of the region is geographically part of. On the agenda of foreign policy of Turkey there are a series of problems: Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Iranian nuclear program, the peace process from the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Central Asia, the Eastern Mediterranean, the energetic security, the fight against terrorism or the financial crisis.

A special attention is given to the relation with USA, a relation between a global and a regional power with the capacity to positively contribute in the international affairs. The both states need one each over: Turkey for security guarantees offered by USA; and USA for Turkey's important geostrategic position conferring it openness to the hot areas of the Middle East. The relations between Turkey and USA, defined by President Barack Obama as the „model partnership”, intend to amplify the efforts to bring stability, peace and prosperity in different areas of the Globe.

Internally, Turkey confronts with certain vulnerabilities as: poverty ratio (inflation rate 12%, minimum unemployment rate 10%) combined with the demographic pressure, the population urbanization and alphabetization; the existence of deep divisions between the republican elites sustained by the army, the Islamite moderates and radicals; the Kurd problem²⁰.

By all means, Turkey is preferred for supremacy in the pan-Islamic movement for a series of reasons: moderate radicalism; rejects the fundamentalism and terrorism as mean of battle; represents a counterbalance to the trends of power growth in the region of the Russian Federation and USA; recognized military power; position as energetic corridor; the control and security of hydro-carbonates transport in and for all the directions (the Russian Federation, the Middle East, the Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, Europe); mediator and bumper between the Islamic rim land and Christian heartland, provides the securing of NATO southern flank; frontier with Iran and Syria, etc.

Turkey, being aware by these advantages, punctually aims to accomplish its intended goals. The Turk politic annalist Şktem from Oxford opinions „*in the new world, wherein the Occident looses its positions, Turkey has all is needed to play an significant role: economic and political pragmatism and a decisive sent to change the power relations*”²¹.

²⁰ Teodor Frunzeti, Vladimir Zodian, *Lumea 2011. Encicopedie politică și militară, studii strategice și de securitate*, Tehnical Editorial Army Centre Publishing, Bucharest, 2011, p. 267.

²¹ *Foreign Policy Magazine* march/april 2011, „Lumea Turciei”, interview of Octavian Manea, p. 60.

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