

PATHOLOGICAL PARTNERSHIP OF TURKEY AND THE US

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Not very long ago, in 2009, terms like "strategic partnership" or "model partnership" were used to describe Turkish-American relations. Those who used these terms were underlying the long term security partnership, common objectives in world's most turbulent region, in the issues like Iraq and Afghanistan and commitment to work together.

Those who advocated "Model Partnership", during the Obama's visit of Turkey in 2009 April suggested that modern, secular Turkey with its Muslim population would serve as a model to other Muslim nations.

These were just ideas and never been materialized on paper yet they reflected a positive perspective and were important. Today we face far different reality. Perhaps Turkish-American relations are at the lowest level since the beginning of it. We are in the worst days of Turkish-American relations because there is not much hope for quick recovery. There are great disagreements and even existential conflict between the two sides. If we have to develop a concept to define this relationship I would term it "pathological partnership."

I think at the bottom of this problem lies a great misunderstanding, false expectations and misjudgment about the regional affairs. Especially American decision makers' analysis about Turkey, its concerns, its motives and its politics are far from the reality.

First of all it should be said that Turkey's geopolitical importance is still important for the American strategy to counter-balance Russian Federation today. However, it seems that the U.S. decision makers under the impact of CENTCOM prioritized its tactical activities and achievements in the Middle East. U.S. Kurdish policies in Iraq and Syria have distanced Turkey from Washington. Analysts have so much focused on their perceptions and they cannot see other aspects of the situation.

The latest statements of U.S. Special Envoy to Syria Mr. James Jeffrey prove that fact. He said "The U.S. view is, let's pull the plug on Astana." In fact Turkey had two successful military operations against terrorist organizations in Syria with the help of Astana Process, getting support of the Russian Federation. Turkey defeated ISIS in the Northern Syria with Operation Euphrates Shield. This enabled U.S. operation in Raqqa to be successful. Also Turkey defeated PKK/YPG terrorists in Afrin.

Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu's reaction to Jeffrey was not surprising in this regard when he said "The statement by Jeffrey is unfortunate. If the cease-fire in Syria is still preserved, even despite the violations, if today we can still talk about a political process, if we can discuss the constitutional committee... they have been achieved thanks to the Astana process and Sochi [talks]."

Another common mistake can be seen in the Foreign Policy article by James Jeffrey and David Pollack. Two authors wrote that "There is a way forward, tricky but essential; to reconcile American interests with both their Turkish and Syrian Kurdish allies.

The first step is to encourage the PYD to further distance itself from the PKK, while reminding Turkey privately that the PYD has largely kept its 2012 commit-

ment not to provide material support to the PKK inside Turkey. The second step should be to set up direct channels for resumed discussions between the PYD and Turkey, and between the PYD and what remains of the mainstream, moderate Syrian Arab opposition that Turkey still supports."

These expectations prove that the problem, the situation and the attitude of Turkey and Turkish public are not understood at all. Today the enemy number one for Turkey is the PKK and its affiliates elsewhere. An average IQ person can easily understand the connection between the PKK and the PYD. The decision to form the PKK branches in Iraq, Syria and Iran was accepted at the 8th P.K.K. Congress on 20-24 April 2002. Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat/Democratic Union Party (PYD) was established on 17 September 2003, in order to continue its existence in Syria under the orders of Abdullah Öcalan. Another security threat for Turkey is FETÖ.

A great large portion of Turkish public believes that FETÖ is responsible for Turkey's current problems. The trauma of July 15 attacks is much deeper than the Western governments think. The lack of support from the U.S. and from other Western capitals to Turkey against these threats is the source of deep distrust.

Stephen Walt's theory is states form alliances when they face a common threat. The main logic behind Astana/Sochi talks among Turkey, Iran and Russia is no different. Turkey is looking for friends against these existential threats since she feels alone and abandoned by her traditional allies.

The U.S. has not responded Turkey's security problems on the contrary she continued supporting Turkey's two biggest enemies. The deadlock between the two countries can only be resolved through U.S.'s reconsidering and remembering Turkey's role in her global and regional strategies.

Turkey is on the intersection point of three competing geopolitical strategies. U.S. efforts to keep its position as dominant global power, Russian Eurasianism and Chinese One belt one road strategy. The will and decision of Turkey will determine which of these strategies prevail.

If the relations sour and Turkey leaves NATO as more and more people suggest it louder, southern flank of NATO will collapse. Russia's hand will be stronger in the Black Sea, Mediterranean and even in the Gulf region.

If Turkey gets closer to China Modern Silk Road Project will be more meaningful, carrying Chinese impact to the shores of Europe. The price of distancing Turkey will be high for Washington too. It would be the greatest strategic loss in 40 years in the Middle East after the Islamic Revolution in Iran. For these reasons experts should analyze the facts better regarding Turkey and review the current approach. It is vital for both countries. Improving relations is the interest for both sides. But biased analysts and experts are poisoning the air with their ideological perspectives.

The start of Turkish-American relationship was based on common security concerns. Beginning to correct relations from where things began can be a good start.