

E. Bağış¹

GLOBAL DILEMMAS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF EURASIA, FROM A TURKISH PERSPECTIVE

We all live in an era where we have to be acquainted with “stoicism”. According to some: “Stoicism is about mastering what we can control and accepting what we cannot.”

The philosophy originated in the third century BC in Athens. The philosophy asserts that virtue (such as wisdom) is happiness and judgment should be based on behaviour, rather than words. We don’t control and cannot rely on external events, only ourselves and our responses.

AT Kearney issues a list of social and economic predictions every year and they are usually quite accurate. I wanted to check their predictions for 2019 before preparing my notes for St. Petersburg.

The summary of these predictions are:

1. The US – China trade war will intensify.
2. Bitcoin will lead to the consolidation and maturation of the cryptocurrency market.
3. The global trash crisis will spur innovations in waste management.
4. The global shipping industry will crash into new sulfur regulations.

5. The Xi – Putin relationship will be the world’s most consequential bromance.

6. The global anxiety epidemic will lead to a proliferation of new products.

7. A sand shortage will grind the gears of the global construction industry.

8. The looming emerging markets credit crisis will grow in both scale and scope.

9. Africa will be more connected than ever.

10. Real-life “Iron Man” will materialize in the form of exoskeletons.

We live in an age of complexity and unpredictability. On the one hand, the accelerating pace of globalization brings us closer in the fastest way. On the other hand, the world is being divided more and more on ethnicities, religions, sects and other factors. The humanity is trying to cope with the trauma of such a dilemma. Whereas some of us promote more integration and unity, others defend the idea of building walls or breaking away, which resembles the protectionist and isolationist tendencies of the interwar years. These conflicting policies prevent us from addressing the global challenges in unity, and leaves us vulnerable against them. It is no secret that the current system of the UN, which is a product of the Cold War, is no more capable of responding to the needs of the humanity. That is why we strongly and urgently call for the reformation of the UN

¹ Minister of European Union Affairs of Turkey (2009–2013), member of the Turkish Parliament representing Istanbul (2002–2015). Author of many academic papers published in journals and numerous articles in national and foreign newspapers as an international strategic thinker and consultant. Chairman of the “Occidental Studies Centre & Western Platform” at the Istanbul Aydin University, member of the Board of Trustees at Istanbul Ticaret University.

and the UN Security Council system, promoting the idea of “World is Bigger Than Five”.

My country, Turkey, is not immune to global and regional turbulences either. On the contrary, unlike some fortunate European Allies and partners, we stand right at the epicenter of multiple challenges, in a highly volatile geography.

I would like to draw your attention to our immediate neighborhood. In the south, in Middle East, we are facing the biggest turbulences of our time. In the north, we are surrounded by both frozen and actual conflicts among former Soviet Union Republics. In the west, we are an inherent part of the Balkans, where peace and stability remain fragile. Additionally, Turkey stands at the crossroads of the routes of migrants and Foreign Terrorist Fighters, which pose a direct threat not only to our country, but also to the whole international order.

Such a geography requires Turkey to be strong, resilient and active. This is key for the peace and stability of our region. It is also self-evident that the peace and stability of this geography is vital for Turkey’s well-being. So there is a mutual benefit here. That is why, Turkey has been following a principled foreign policy since its foundation by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, guided by the dictum: “Peace at Home, Peace in the World.”

To put this main principle into practice in today’s conditions, we have developed a new concept in our foreign policy, which we summarize with the catchphrase of “enterprising and humanitarian approach”. What does it mean?

First, our foreign policy is enterprising in the sense that we take initiative and action to promote peace and stability in our region and beyond, instead of adopting a passive stance. In this regard, we have developed many multilateral regional mechanisms to create inclusive platforms of dialogue and cooperation, in addition to our efforts of mediation and for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Turkish-Russian relationship is a great example. Despite difficult times of the past the two neighbors enjoy much more dialogue at every level on almost every relevant issue these days. Meanwhile, it is my firm belief that we should continue to focus on the positive agenda items and further the cooperation in various fields. The High-Level Cooperation Council Meeting (HLCC) process led by President Putin and President Erdogan serves this goal.

Second, we follow a human-oriented foreign policy that is independent of geography, race, religion or culture. For example, you can see Turkey helping Somalia build its security forces; you can see Turkey in Afghanistan as part of NATO actively contributing to the security and stability of this country; you can see Turkey in Iraq as the biggest donor for the restructuring of our neighboring country; you can see Turkey in Bangladesh providing humanitarian assistance to the displaced people from Myanmar; or, you can see Turkey in Haiti providing relief efforts for the victims of the earthquake.

When it comes to Syria, we currently host more than 3.5 million Syrians in Turkey. The amount we have spent for our Syrians guests from our national sources has exceeded 35 billion US Dollars, whereas the total contribution we received from the international community is far from meeting the expectations.

Why do we follow such a humanitarian foreign policy? Because, we believe this is the only way to address the con-

temporary challenges in their roots, before they turn into global problems.

I would also like to elaborate on Turkey’s foreign policy priorities on regional basis, with a view to setting the records straight.

Let me start with the Balkans. As I have mentioned earlier, Turkey has been an inherent part of the Balkans for centuries. Also, as a founding member of the Council of Europe, longtime member of NATO, OECD, OSCE and a candidate country for the EU, Turkey constitutes an integral part of the West. Our vision for the Balkans is in full consistency with the vision of our Western partners. We fully and actively support the integration of all Balkans countries with the Euro-Atlantic institutions. In this regard, we see Prespa Agreement as an important step in resolving the name issue. We fully support the Belgrad-Prishtina Dialogue, believing that the normalization of Serbia-Kosovo relations is key to the stability of the Balkans. Again, we strongly support the unity, territorial integrity and stability of Bosnia-Herzegovina and its integration with the rest of the world. Yet, various circles, and most regrettably some of our partners, try hard to label Turkey as a so-called “destabilizing factor” in the Balkans. These efforts are groundless and irrational, unless they serve other purposes or interests.

Again in the Middle East, Turkey would be more delighted than any other country to see a stable, prosperous and democratic Syria and Iraq. Turkey has suffered the most due to the ongoing conflict in Syria and the fragmentation in Iraq. The threats emanating from the crisis in these countries constitute a direct challenge to our national security. That’s why we spare no effort to lead the joint efforts to stop further bloodshed in Syria and finding a political solution that would ensure long term peace and stability in our southern neighborhood. In this regard, we consider the Sochi Agreement on Idlib as a real success on the ground, which prevented further tragedies, including a new massive migration flow.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus issue continues to be at the core of the challenges. Turkey participated at the CransMontana meetings with a strong will and determination to contribute to the joint efforts for finding a just, viable and durable solution to the problem.

The positive approach and determination exhibited by Turkey, as well as the Turkish Cypriots were acknowledged by almost all in the international community. Regrettably, the Crans Montana meetings, hence the negotiation process initiated in 2008, concluded with no result. Turkey continues to believe that only a negotiated settlement based on dialogue and diplomacy can lead to a just, viable and durable solution in Cyprus. Therefore, we defend, Turkey and Greece should continue to work in this direction.

This also applies to the issue of the exploitation of the hydrocarbon resources of the island. Insisting on unilateral activities with a view to exclude and isolate the Turkish Cypriots in the island, will certainly not be productive for the long-term positive aspirations regarding our region.

Through high level and consistent political exchanges, dialogue channels should be kept up and running.

The European Union. Turkey’s EU accession process has been discussed from different angles during the more than fifty years old history of this relationship. In any case, “What happened to Turkey’s motivation towards EU acces-

sion?" is a million dollars question containing various aspects and perspectives.

Turkish and European scholars focus on discursive and policy (de)Europeanisation within Turkey. They have examined official EU statements and European right – wing Eurosceptic discourse on Turkish accession, as well as approaching the Turkish accession process through comparative perspectives with Western Balkan countries and post – war Germany.

These scholars underline that thanks to the EU accession process, civil society flourished across the country. However, the lack of attention paid to the NGOs became an issue of criticism over the years.

It is important to realize that accession process is not only a political and technical issue but also an issue between societies. In this sense, Netherlands emerge as an important case as it had strained relations with Turkey in the last years. It is pleasing to see a more positive attitude towards Turkey from Netherlands after their elections.

Looking at party competition in the domestic debate regarding European integration; when we compare the post-war debate in Germany with that of the early 2000s of Turkey underlining AK Party and the early Christian Democrats show a resemblance for the adhesion of European integration. Meanwhile, dominant left-wing opposition parties – CHP in Turkey and SPD in post-war Germany – took a similar stance against EU.

In short, by elaborating on critical topics and cases with regard to Turkish accession to the EU, it shall be underlined that if a reluctance in the Turkish side has emerged, the EU and Member States have had their share in this.

As I have reiterated many times in my earlier articles, Turkey's EU journey could easily be included in the Guinness book of records since no other country has waited this long in order to join any international organization. European Union's approach to Turkey has been perceived as insulting to our citizens at times especially during the last several years.

I have always argued that Turkey should perceive EU as a dietician. We all know that we should watch what we eat and we should exercise regularly in order to lead a healthy life. However, following a tested and proven prescription of a reliable dietician who monitors you regularly always helps. This fact would not change even if the dietician herself is overweight or has a few clogged arteries. On the other hand if a dietician starts insulting his or her client, that individual would be inclined to either look for another dietician or totally give up the program. It is my sincere hope that the biggest question in Brussels during the upcoming years would not be; "who lost Turkey?"

Missile complex S-400. I would like to discuss with you a report titled "Neither Friend nor Foe: The Future of U. S.-Turkey Relations", from the Council on Foreign Relations.

In the report, Eni Enrico Mattei Senior Fellow for Middle East and Africa Studies Steven A. Cook argues that the strategic relationship between the United States and Turkey is over and that in many areas Turkey is a competitor and an antagonist. Cook recommends that the United States develop military alternatives to using Incirlik Air Base, continue

to cooperate with the Kurdish People's Protection Units in Syria, and take a public stand on Turkish policies that undermine U.S. interests.

Naturally these kinds of reports published by pro US government think tanks create suspicions with the public opinion of my country. It adds insult to injury when Turkey is criticized for starting negotiations with Russia to purchase S-400 air missile defense systems especially after being rejected by her NATO allies to provide similar protection measures.

Alliance of Civilizations. I believe we should all congratulate one of our team members at the Global Circle, Minister Miguel Moratinos since he has been selected as the new Secretary General of the Alliance of Civilizations of the United Nations. Miguel's vast experience as an accomplished statesman will definitely help this organization to provide solutions to the ongoing problems of our common globe.

I recently read Dankwart A. Rustow's analysis on "What are the conditions that make democracy possible and what conditions make it work?" Rustow argues that the question should not be about how to build democracy but about how to preserve the democracy that exists at the origin. And gives an example to demonstrate the validity of his opinion that there is a clear difference between American democracies and Scandinavian compared to French and German, where the first succeeded unexpectedly while the second collapsed during the third and fourth generations. He adds that students in developing regions such as the Middle East, Latin America, South Asia and Central Africa have a curious curiosity about democracy, and the reason they are confused is the difference between mature democracy such as those in America, Britain, Sweden and those struggling to achieve a degree of democracy such as "Lebanon, Turkey, Ceylon, Peru and Venezuela" and this will make them wonder how democracy first emerged.

The transition to democracy, as he sees it, occurs when a government enters a legitimate crisis, leading to a split between political elites who are the key players in the transition to democracy.

This division ranges from those who want the old system of the elite and those who want to change the regime and are represented by the opposition.

"Democracy is based on difference," he says. "They need both behaviors to produce controversy. All of this takes place during the first period in which democracy is formed and adopted between Democrats and non-Democrats. He continues to sum up his vision of his model, which leads to the transition to democracy: "Finally the effective model of transition must allow for the possibility that the different teams can be between supporters and opponents, making the land fertile for democratization.

Since the only constant is change we have to get used to stoicism and "master what we can control and accept what we cannot."

Thanks to our host, Rector of our University, Dr. Alexander S. Zapesotskiy we will continue to learn from each other and find solutions to our common challenges through these brainstorming sessions.