

VII. The New World Order and the Middle East: The Creation and Realignment of States in Three Stages

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Stage one

In 1996, the then Turkish Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan, signed an agreement with the “moderate” President Muhammed Khatami of Iran, for the building of a pipeline to carry Turkmen natural gas passing through Iran to Turkey (between Tauris and Erzurum). The total investment reached \$23 billion.

The whole situation was added to by the (completely inconsistent) tolerance shown by the US State Department¹ towards the creation

1. The American deputy secretary of state, Alan Larson, said in July 1997, that the pipeline would not be subject to the regulations of the D'Amato Law since it involved Turkmen natural gas destined for Turkey, and not Iran. However, on 15 October 1997, the US State Department spokesman, James Rubin, made a curious statement which contradicted Mr. Larson, saying that Turkmen natural gas would not be allowed into Turkey via Iran, even though Washington happened to support the transfer of Turkmen gas to Turkey. Mr. Rubin said that in July the administration had not mentioned that the Turkish natural gas plans, including the purchase of gas from Turkmenistan, appeared to be an activity that would cause legal sanctions to be imposed. He went on to say that the US considered Turkey's decision to buy gas from Turkmenistan rather than from Iran a positive development. The administration had not given its approval for any pipeline going through Iran and "any such plan must be examined carefully". This phrase leaves much room for the US to accept the passage of the pipeline through Iran. However, the Erbakan-Khatami agreement remains an undeniable fact. Mr. Rubin went on to say that the Turkish government had assured the US that plans to supply Turkish natural gas

of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Turkey via a route south of the Caspian Sea and through Iran (construction of which has already begun)² and also by the pressure from the Clinton administration on

did not involve the purchase of Iranian gas and that the US accepted those assurances in good faith. He explained that the pipeline referred to was for the purchase of gas, which the US considered better than the prospect of gas being bought from Iran, because it was from Turkmenistan. There was, he said, a difference between buying gas from Turkmenistan and buying gas from Iran (see *Turkish Daily News*, 18 October 1997: «US backpedals on Turkmen-Iran-Turkish gas deal», A4). It becomes clear from the italicized phrase that the entire subject is being looked at by the US State Department according to which country is buying the gas and not according to which country the pipeline will ultimately run through! Moreover, the fact alone of the signing of the agreement to build the Tauris-Erzurum pipeline, which remains without any word from Mr. Rubin, shows the tolerant attitude of the State Department towards Turkey's infringement of D'Amato. Moreover, the Anglo-Dutch Shell had announced on 12 October 1997, that it had entered into talks with Turkey and Turkmenistan over the construction of a pipeline to carry natural gas between the two countries through Iran. On the same day the Washington Post reported that Shell had negotiated the construction of a \$2.5-billion pipeline via northern Iran, which would probably be ready within the next two years, i.e. around the time that these words are being written. Despite this, State Department officials maintained on the very same day that D'Amato was not being infringed because the pipeline would carry only Turkmen natural gas bound for Turkey and would not take on Iranian production. However, I would like to ask the following: a) has any European company invested (a hundredfold) in Iran? b) will the project remain in the domain of Iran's industrial infrastructure? and c) will Iran receive a tariff for the transit of natural gas through its territory? This would significantly strengthen the Iranian economy.

2. Some months after the above statements by Rubin, reality began to be overtaken by reality: the Turkish-owned firm, Botas, announced on 2 March 1998, that it had extended the final deadline for bids to build the final section of the natural gas pipeline from Iran and Turkmenistan to Central Turkey. The deadline was extended to 17 March. The final section is part of the main 1420-km pipeline running from western Iran (Tauris) and terminating in Ankara. The pipeline will initially carry 3 million cubic meters of gas starting from 1999 - after the 1996 agreement - and for 23 years. The figure will increase to 10 million cubic meters by 2005. During the first stage of the project Turkey began to build a 300-km section from the Iranian border to Erzurum, with Iran constructing the 270-km stretch from Tauris to the Turkish border. The final 1272-km section from Erzurum to Ankara will be built in four stages: a) 312 km from Erzurum to Sivas, b) 260 km from Sivas to Kayseri, c) 320 km from Kayseri to Ankara and d) 380 km from Kayseri to Seydisehir. If only one company is selected then

“Anglo-Saxon” multinational oil companies to choose the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline.³ What is interesting is that US secretary of state Madeleine Albright was not at all bothered by the fact that the possible transit of the Tengiz pipeline through Iran was in complete contravention of the D’Amato Law.

Stage one observations

a. It should be made clear that the proposals to transfer natural gas from Turkmenistan and the Baku-Ceyhan proposal are directly linked with southeast Turkey and the Kirkuk-Yioumourtalik pipeline. The Baku-Ceyhan pipeline is expected to terminate approximately at the midpoint of Kirkuk-Yioumourtalik, so as to use at least half of its route to Iskenderun and thereby reduce what will in any case be the huge cost of its construction.

b. Despite pressure, investors remain uninspired by the region because

it should already have constructed at least 50 km of 24-inch pipeline. If the contract is awarded to a consortium then the minimum is 200 km of the same diameter pipeline. The constructors will finance 85% of the design costs and will bear the full cost of the equipment and the pipes. Botas refused to give an approximate cost for the entire project but initial estimates were for \$500 million for all four stages («*Turkish Daily News*», 3 March 1998, «Turkey extends deadline for Iran gas line stretch»).

3. This fact became completely clear after the visit to Ankara (on 10 November 1997) of the American energy secretary, Federico Pena. He was there to sign an agreement between the US and Turkey over strategic issues concerning the energy exports from the Caspian and Central Asia. Mr. Pena stated that Turkey was the focal point of this effort and that the two countries could promote yet another element of the alliance between them, their alliance in the field of energy. According to the American minister the agreement included various aspects. Firstly, Turkey had to increase its energy consumption –as he said it would– for its necessary economic growth to take place, while American companies would work on that together with their Turkish counterparts so that those needs could be settled. Secondly, he said, demand for electrical energy and natural gas in Turkey would continue to expand. He stated that the US had committed itself to helping Turkey develop a diversified and safe natural gas supply. Thirdly, he declared the US’s resolute support for Turkey as an export route for energy exports from the Caspian and Central Asia. Mr. Pena added that the US hoped to see the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline completed soon.

of unrest associated with the Kurdish population living there. Turkish “Provide Comfort”-style military operations against the Kurds in this geographical zone must therefore be explained and evaluated for America’s tolerance (to the point of approval) of Turkish purges against the Kurds to be understood.

Stage one conclusions

i) From Washington’s point of view it is completely desirable for southeast Turkey to be immediately rid of the PKK, thereby increasing the possibility of “Anglo-Saxon” oil companies choosing the Baku-Ceyhan route. This would contribute towards a significant rising of Turkey’s geopolitical influence as a regional superpower in the zone of the “golden triangle”: the Caspian Sea, Iran and the Persian Gulf.

ii) As I noted three years ago,⁴ a fast-track process for bringing Tehran and Washington and Tehran and Ankara closer together must be embarked upon and therefore

iii) A final solution to the Kurdish problem must be found to make the climate for investment and development in the Middle East more favorable.

Stage two

This concerns the completion of the Oslo agreement and in particular the withdrawal of Israeli forces from 12% of the occupied territories of the West Bank.

Stage two observations

The negotiations in this process are destined to be concerned with the following issues:

a) The sources of the Jordan River, and thus the issue of the Golan

4. I. Th. Mazis, *Geopolitiki ton Idaton sti Mesi Anatoli* [The geopolitics of water in the Middle East], Trochalia, Athens 1996.

Heights, which are involved in the long-running dispute between Damascus and Tel Aviv;

b) The waters of the Euphrates River between Turkey and Syria, an old and burning issue between Damascus and Ankara;

c) Israel's water supply, the issue that remains paramount for Tel Aviv and is heightened by the strained relations between Damascus and Ankara and between Tel Aviv and Ankara.

It becomes clear that the factor common to the above problems is that of the waters in the region and the insecurity of Israel and Syria over how to safeguard the water reserves necessary for their survival and development. This issue can be analyzed in two ways:

a) The only impediment for Damascus is Turkish hydrogeopolitics in the form of the Great Anatolian Project (GAP). Damascus has counter-balanced this policy up until now by promoting and boosting the goals of the PKK in southeast Anatolia. This is also a vital region for Turkey's strategic GAP hydraulic projects designed to give Ankara control of the waters of the Tigris and the Euphrates.⁵

b) The impediment for Tel Aviv remains Damascus and the issue of Palestinian statehood. The Palestinians also lay claim to the water supply vital for their survival and development. However, this cannot be provided by Israel, unless its own water-supply problem has first been solved. This derives from Damascus via the problem of the Golan Heights⁶ (the sources of the Jordan) the return of which is demanded by Syria.

To solve this Gordian knot it remains for an exchange to be decided upon, an exchange that will satisfy all those involved but also fulfill the security conditions laid down by the state of Israel in what is, from a geopolitical point of view, a constantly changing region.

Stage two conclusions

i) It is thus logical, according to the above, that there should be reasonable Israeli exhortations to Turkey to satisfy Syrian demands to supply water from the Euphrates, in exchange for Syrian support for the PKK and its military activities in south-east Anatolia being cut off. The

5. *Ibid.*

6. On 5 June 1967 Israel's six-day war against Egypt, Syria and Jordan broke out. When it was over, Israel had captured Sinai, the Golan Heights, the West Bank of Jordan, Gaza and East Jerusalem. On 14 December 1981, Israel annexed Golan.

first “concession” which Israel would demand from Syria would clearly be the non-offer of asylum to the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Ocalan.

ii) It is also logical that Tel Aviv should desire the possibility of guarantees from Damascus on a) certain counterbalancing offers in the matter of the sources of the Jordan (Golan), and b) the “good offices” of Damascus towards the Palestinian side with reference to the final form and pace of implementation of the Oslo agreement in the West Bank.

iii) In compensation for the above, Tel Aviv would be able to use its own initiatives to push for the conditions supporting the creation of an independent Kurdish state in the region at the expense of Iraq, i.e. in the old sanjak of Mosul (an administrative region in the Ottoman Empire). These Israeli initiatives would meet with the acceptance or at least the tolerance of the key players in the region under the following conditions:

a) the elimination of the PKK as a factor unable to assimilate into the New World Order in the region;

b) the creation of the conditions for two-party politics in the Kurdish state being created in Northern Iraq with active political figures such as Barjani and Talabani, who have the trust of the key states in the region, i.e. Turkey and Iran respectively, and have demonstrated their followers’ tendency towards assimilation in the states where they have lived until now (Turkey and Iran);

c) the guaranteed involvement and presence of an “Anglo-Saxon” (or NATO, under the new doctrine) and Israeli element in the future economy, politics and defense of the Kurdish state being established in Northern Iraq, as well as control of the initial balance of power until full balance and stability in the geopolitical system is achieved.

This guarantee should have existed previously and in an institutional framework, in order to legalize every possible military intervention which might be judged necessary during the course of settling the above and in the case of things not turning out as expected. Thus were signed the Turkish-Israeli defense agreements, such as the Security-Confidentiality Pact (31 March 1994), the Memorandum on Military Aircraft and Training (18 September 1995) and the Agreements on Military Training Cooperation and Military and Industrial Cooperation (April 1996).⁷

7. The signatories chosen to represent each side (Tel Aviv and Ankara) and their status also show the degree of importance attached by both countries to these agreements. For Israel it was David Ivry, General Director of the Israeli Min-

Stage three

a) We begin with the threat of war breaking out on the Turkish-Syrian border with a large number of Turkish armed units being sent down there. This move functioned as a wonderful pretext for domestic –and Arab– consumption.

b) Syria of the already weak President Assad was thus able to proceed to the deportation of Abdullah Ocalan, which ultimately led to his arrest and handover to Ankara. This resulted in his recent death sentence.

c) In September 1999 Masoud Barjani and Jelal Talabani were invited by President Clinton to the White House to normalize relations between them and shake hands. We have thus witnessed stage one in the creation of the preconditions guaranteeing the operation of a two-party system in the Kurdish state being created in Northern Iraq.

The creation of a Kurdish state under the control of Turkey, Israel and NATO, as mentioned above and with the approval of a “modernizing” and western-friendly regime in Tehran⁸ suits everyone:

I. The USA, because land will be taken from Iraq, bringing about great domestic unrest for the Baghdad regime, at an overwhelming political cost for Saddam Hussein, resulting in his loss of power.

II. Iran, because in this way one of its most significant geopolitical opponents and contenders for regional power in the strategically important Middle East will be weakened. In addition, its fear of possible escalation of Kurdish claims being promoted by the PKK in Iran itself would be conclusively ended.

III. Turkey, because it would then be able to proceed without difficulty with its geopolitically important plans in southeast Anatolia (the oil pipeline, the GAP) and to evolve into a regional power (a center of

istry of Defense and an eminent strategic analyst, and for Turkey, the former Turkish Deputy Chief of Staff for National Defense, Cevik Bir, and not some political official.

8. On 10 and 11 July 1999 there were bloody clashes in Tehran between student supporters of the “modernizing” President Khatami and fanatical Islamist students. The dead supporters of the current president, who has been called Iran’s Gorbachev, bear witness to the beginning of the overthrow of the old regime in the manner of May 1968 in France, the Greek Polytechnic School in 1973 or Tiananmen Square in Beijing in April 1989. What will happen next is perhaps predictable if we exclude the case of Tiananmen Square.

gravity) in the “golden triangle” region mentioned above of the Caspian, Iran and the Gulf. Furthermore, a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq could deliver it from those elements of the Kurdish population that display intolerance and no desire to be assimilated into Turkish life as defined by the military and diplomatic establishment in Ankara.

IV. Syria would benefit in the same way as Tehran, from the weakening of Iraq. It would solve –with the decisive acquiescence of Tel Aviv and Ankara– its water-supply problem over the waters of the Euphrates (with a flow of 750 cubic meters a second as opposed to 500 cubic meters a second today) and present a “national” victory if it manages –again with the compliance of Israel– to guarantee the return of the Golan Heights. This is not only for reasons of prestige but also because it would place an ironclad guarantee on part of the water reserves deriving from the sources of the Jordan.

V. Israel

i) will have conclusively weakened one of its most powerful geopolitical opponents in the region: Iraq;

ii) will guarantee influence over the transit routes for oil reserves from Mosul and Kirkuk to Yioumourtalik;

iii) will thus also be able to have control of the future Baku-Ceyhan route;

iv) will have solved the problem of the sources of the Jordan River in Golan and will be able to safeguard part of its water reserves, necessary for the supply of water to the occupied territories of the West Bank and therefore absolutely vital if the Oslo agreement is to be implemented. This calls for the creation of an independent Palestinian entity and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from 12% of the occupied territories.

Epilogue

The above geopolitical situation creates the conditions which will allow the signing of treaties of friendship and cooperation between the Arab countries in the region and Israel. Unthreatened by the Iranian or Syrian export of “Islamic revolution” or “Kurdish terrorism” respectively, relieved of the “pan-Arab syndromes” caused by the non-resolution of the Palestinian problem, Arab governments in the region will no longer have any impediment to their promotion of long-range plans for

cooperation with Israel, aiming at the development and prosperity of the region.

The only stumbling block, particularly for the Arab countries, will be the militarist regime of Turkey, which, being in a strong position and containing far-right elements linked with Turkish parastate organizations, will seek a hegemonic role in the region, exploiting its strategic position as regards the sources of the Tigris and the Euphrates and the proposed routes of the Baku-Ceyhan and Tengiz-Tehran-Tauris-Ceyhan oil pipelines.

At this point, however, I fear that it is necessary to change the script. Certain “inelastic” geopolitical elements intrude into our model and turn the situation completely on its head. The most important of these is the naturally occurring geopolitical rise of Iran. Let us examine what this means for the geopolitical balance of the region.

A. We have noted that peace in the region improves Iran’s geopolitical position, because the passage of the pipelines carrying Caspian reserves of hydrocarbons out of the country is the shortest route for carrying the deposits from the Caspian and the Central Asian republics to the Gulf, which already has the necessary terminals to support (in terms of technical infrastructure) the distribution of oil to the markets of India, China and the Pacific. An unavoidable geopolitical principle thus applies here: control of the most economic route for distributing a product constitutes the strategic choice for the control of a region’s economy. And the control of the economy in this geographical zone means control of the political development of two-thirds of the planet. History teaches us that these principles must be applied by all.

For the same reasons of physical geography but also of culture, Iran’s standing among the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union is much higher than that of Turkey, which appears to be losing the game of the “Big Turanian”. Let us not forget that for Tehran the Central Asian republics are “very close” in a way that they are not for Turkey. And unfortunately for Ankara, they will soon become much closer.

B. Yet at whose expense is all this? Clearly Turkey’s, which seeks control of these routes.

C. So what is the conclusion of the above reasoning? Quite simply that Turkey’s geopolitical dreams will not be realized if developments include Iran coming closer to the West and in particular the US. Perhaps this is also the explanation for the toppling of Necmettin Erbakan by Turkey’s military-judicial establishment, just as it might also explain the promo-

tion and tolerance of “light Islam” by the US State Department (see related US views). This tolerance is not in keeping with the spirit of recent prosecutions of moderate mystic Islamist orders in Turkey, such as that of Fethullah Gülen (the Nur order), noted for its curious association, despite its theological political rhetoric, with the basic secular instincts of the Ankara regime.

Moreover, the role of regional overlord that the Turkish regime has set aside for itself is not alarming only to Arab states. It also poses a threat to Balkan countries such as Bulgaria, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece, each for different reasons. Developments of this kind make no contribution to the fulfillment of the Mackinderian model, nor do they help serve “Anglo-Saxon” interests, which are identified with free trade, in turn a bolster for peace, security and stability.

An international power with unstable political and geostrategic characteristics and expansionist tendencies, which is defined as a threat by its neighbors, is no help in securing the climate demanded by the internationalization of the economy in such a sensitive region of the planet.

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