

EUROPEAN UNION'S AMBITION TO CREATE THE EUROPEAN ARMY AND THE PARADE OF ABBREVIATIONS: CFSP, ESDP, CSDP & PESCO

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EUROPEAN UNION – TURKEY

LEADERS' MEETING



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The Turkey-EU summit held in Varna, 26 March 2018

On 26 March 2018, President Recep T. Erdogan met with the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and the President of the European Council Donald Tusk at a summit meeting in the city of Varna, Bulgaria.

The three leaders, hosted by the Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov, have reportedly discussed a bunch of strategic issues within the context of the Turkish- European Union (EU) relations.

The issues that the leaders are said to have discussed extended from humanitarian issues, such as EU funding for support for Turkey that hosts millions of refugees and visa-free travel for Turkish citizens inside the EU territory to military issues, such as cooperation with regard to foreign terrorist fighters and other areas where the EU and Turkey share important security interests.

Nevertheless, not much concrete progress has reportedly been made during the “European Union – Turkey Leaders’ Meeting”, as was anticipated by most political observers and foreign policy analysts.

Indeed, the Bulgarian Premier Borissov summarized the outcome of the summit by saying “the biggest success of EU-Turkey meeting was that

after a year in exchanges of remarks, [the leaders] returned to the negotiating table each with his arguments”. Borissov also emphasized that “this channel of dialogue should continue, no matter how difficult it is sometimes.”

The EU-Turkey relations have always been difficult due to a multitude of reasons that have peculiar social, political, cultural, economic and military dimensions.

Each of these dimensions, however, requires a clear vision on both sides as well as dedication, hard work and sincere effort in order to overcome the obstacles that stand on the way to reach the ultimate objective of making Turkey a noble partner in the European integration, should this be the desired outcome for all the parties concerned.

That said, one has to be realistic while setting the long-term objectives in the framework of Turkish-European relations. Because, there exist a host of structural problems, especially in the realm of politico-military affairs, which require a sober-minded approach in the attempt to find a solution.

One of these problematic issues that cast a dark shadow on the conduct of the military-strategic relations between Turkey and the EU is the cre-



ation of a European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI), also known as the “European Army” that was envisaged to constitute the backbone of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) of the EU that aims at becoming a “global superpower”.

Despite a series of bilateral (i.e., EU and Turkey) as well as multilateral (i.e., EU, US and Turkey) negotiations, the parties continue to defend their pretty much initial positions that they had put forward two decades ago.

Why is that so? What is it that neither the changing security environment in the world, nor the unprecedented political and military developments in Europe and in its neighborhood compel the parties to find a breakthrough?

Hence, the aim of this paper is to have a look at how this story began two decades ago and evolved over time; why there has been no resolution in the deadlock to date, and where do Turkey and the EU stand today. Then, it may be possible to make comments about what the future holds for both Turkey and the EU in these respects.

Emergence and Evolution of the Idea of Creating a “European Army”

Dramatic changes that occurred in and around Europe in the late 1980s and the early 1990s caused drastic changes in the perceptions of the European states as regards the threats to their interests.

The war that broke out in the territories of the former Yugoslavia has shown to the Europeans that uniting their political and economic power was not enough for them to become a powerful entity in world politics or to stop the atrocities and the war crimes committed by the Serbs, first in Bosnia-Herzegovina and later in Kosovo.

The European leaders have therefore acknowledged that, among other things, they also needed to unite their military power so as not to allow a similar scenario to take place on the Continent again in the future.

In the aftermath of the Washington summit meeting in April 1999, NATO enlarged with the admission of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. Then, the European Union also intensified its efforts to create a European Security and Defense Identity, or the so-called “European Army,” whose decision-making would be under the strict control of the EU.

The European Army was originally envisaged to have the capability to deploy 60,000 troops anywhere in the world within one month, with these being able to conduct military operations with full force, if necessary, and to sustain themselves for at least one year. In other words, the EU wanted to have a military capability with a global reach in order to protect its interests wherever deemed necessary on the globe.

Although some individual declarations hinted at the existence of a more ambitious desire, particularly among the French and German diplomatic, political, and security elite—a desire to become a “global superpower”—these ambitions did not seem to be shared by other members of the EU, especially the Nordic countries, which were known as “welfare states.” Nor were such ambitions substantiated by the political realities of the world at that time.

In order to avoid duplication of forces in the same geographical area, the EU requested the authorization, once and for all, to have automatic and uninterrupted access, if and when necessary, to the military assets of NATO to which they have already made their individual contributions as members of the Alliance.

In April 1999, Washington summit meeting ID expanded with the adoption of NATO Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. Later, the European Union aimed not to name a “European Army”, stating that it would not take a European Security and Defense ID or under strict control of the EU.

However, the NATO Charter requires unanimity amongst members in order for such an authorization to be given to the European Army. At this point, Turkey, as a nonmember of the EU, has made it clear that it would not give its unconditional approval to such a request, which would mean losing its control over the use of NATO assets in the future military operations of the EU. This was because Turkey feared that EU-led operations might well contradict its supreme national interests.

There was good reason to believe in such concerns as 13 out of the 16 worldwide conflict scenarios drawn up by NATO's contingency planners back then have involved regions in the periphery of Turkey, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sandjak, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Karabagh in Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Abkhazia in Georgia, Georgia-South Ossetia, northern Iraq, Iran, Syria, Cyprus, Vojvodina, Privlaka, and Belarus, many of which could require direct involvement by Turkey, depending on the circumstances.

In such a case, EU intervention in conflicts in the immediate neighborhood of Turkey without Ankara's active participation both in the planning and in the operational phases could not only severely damage Turkey's interests but also threaten its security.

What was more worrying was the possibility of an EU military intervention going out of control at one point during the conflict and paving the way for an Article 5 contingency, which would formally pull the non-EU members of NATO as a whole into the conflict. The fundamental commitment of all members of the Alliance to each other's security is enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which states that an attack against one member country is considered as an attack against all.

The Alliance's integrated military structure and common defense planning procedures underpin this commitment to collective defense. They are at the heart of the Alliance's strength and credibility. Turkey, as required by its Article 5 commitments, would have to become involved in a conflict that it had no responsibility for.

If that political entity has to depend on others' military assets and capabilities, it must acknowledge the need to share the decision-making authority, as well as the command and control, with those who somehow contribute to its capabilities.

The Essence of Diverging Approaches of Turkey and the EU

When looked at from the perspective of the EU, the quest for an independent military power was quite understandable. A sovereign political entity (the EU in this case) that has a parliament, a ministerial council, and a full-fledged bureaucracy, as well as a flag and a banknote in circulation (the Euro), has the right, in theory, to make a claim to establish a military unit of its own. Otherwise, its sovereignty would be called into question.

However, if that political entity has to depend on others' military assets and capabilities, it must acknowledge the need to share the decision-making authority, as well as the command and control, with those who somehow contribute to its capabilities.

The divergence of opinion on the autonomy of decision-making in European Security and Defence Policy between Turkey and the EU stemmed from this very point.

Whereas the EU did not want to give away even a tiny portion of its authority over the decision-making autonomy of the European Army, arguing that it was a matter of principle, Turkey insisted on being admitted to the decision-making mechanism whenever NATO assets would be called into action, and especially when the EU conducted military operations in Turkey's immediate neighborhood.

The United States, as the most powerful country in NATO, did not mind allowing the EU to have assured access to the assets of the Alliance if and when the European Army needed.

The United States also urged Turkey to adopt a similar attitude and not to follow a stubborn policy against the claims of the EU, on the grounds that such inflexibility by Turkey might force the EU to head its own way, which would end up with the dissolution of the Alliance.

Thus, the U.S. authorities strived hard to find a middle way between Turkey and the EU, none of which wanted to



step back. Eventually, a solution was found by paying due attention to Turkey's serious concerns and to its supreme interests, primarily in the Aegean and in the eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey was given guarantees by the United States and the United Kingdom, of which the latter was acknowledged as representing the EU's position, that the European Army would not be used in contingencies involving the Aegean as well as the eastern Mediterranean.

In other words, the EU's army would not interfere in problems between Turkey and Greece, both in the Aegean and in Cyprus. Most Turkish officials at the time believed the problem was resolved for Turkey.

Notwithstanding the relaxed approach of Turkish politicians in particular, and without the issuance of any formal approval by the EU, the significance of the deal may evaporate if and when Greek Cypriot leadership asks for the amendment of the agreement between Turkey and EU negotiated back in the early 2000s.

Until such time that Turkey feels more secure and more confident that its supreme national interests in the Aegean and in the eastern Mediterranean will not be hurt by Greece and/or Greek Cypriots, Turkish opposition toward the European security designs covering the region is highly likely to continue.

To Turkey by the United States and the United Kingdom, which is considered to represent the position of the EU is given a guarantee of the Aegean Army Europe and will be used in conflicts including also the eastern Mediterranean.

Recent Developments in the European Defense Architecture

In 2009, the Treaty of Lisbon changed the name of the ESDP to Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which will be an integral part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the forthcoming years.

Hence, the CSDP will provide the EU with an operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets. The EU "may use them on missions outside the Union for peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter. The performance of these tasks shall be undertaken using capabilities provided by the Member States."

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, namely Ms. Federica Mogherini from Italy, acts as the chief coordinator and representative of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, including the CSDP.

In the Fall of 2017, Ms. Mogherini launched a project, namely the Permanent Structured Cooperation, also known as PESCO, with a view to deepening defence cooperation through binding commitments among the EU countries who are capable and willing to do so.

A total of 25 Member States have decided to participate in PESCO, which are the following: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

In December 2017, these states have agreed on a declaration identifying the "first 17 collaborative PESCO projects, ranging from the establishment of a European Medical Command, an EU Training Mission Competence Centre, Cyber Rapid Response Teams and Mutual Assistance in Cyber Security, to Military Disaster Relief and an upgrade of Maritime Surveillance."

PESCO will have a Council, which will be responsible for the overall policy direction and decision-making. Only PESCO members will have the right to vote and the decisions will be taken by unanimity.

The European Defence Agency (EDA) and the European External Action Service (EEAS), including the EU Military Staff, will be working together in order to provide a Secretariat function for PESCO

It is reported that "by May/June 2018, the Council should adopt the common set of governance rules for the projects, as well as a recommendation to sequence the fulfillment of the more binding commitments and to specify more precise objectives."

PESCO, which is "designed to make European defence more efficient and to deliver more output by providing enhanced coordination and collaboration in the areas of investment, capability development and operational readiness" is hoped to "help reinforce the EU's strategic autonomy to act alone when necessary and with partners whenever possible."

Conclusion: What Does the Future Hold for Turkey and the EU?

The evolution of the ESDI into PESCO over the past two decades shows, among other things that there is actually no change in the attitude of the European Union in its unwillingness to share, albeit in a limited fashion, its authority with non-EU countries in its decision-making process regarding to the use of the European Army in military operations even though it will likely depend on the assets of the non-EU countries that are members of NATO.

Turkish authorities, on the other hand, under different governments since the late 1990s, haven't displayed either a particular change of attitude vis-à-vis their request to get involved in at least the planning stages of the potential EU military operations where the European Army might be deployed.

Hence, the deadlock persists and it doesn't seem to go away any time soon unless either side makes dramatic concessions as requested or expected by the other side.

In a world where international cooperation and collaboration among the democratic and civilized states against the existing (i.e., proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, transnational terrorism, etc.,) as well as emerging (i.e., cyber threat, climate change, migration, etc.,) security challenges and threats have become an obligation rather than a choice, Turkey and the EU have no other option but to get as close as they have never been in their history of bilateral relations.

One has to bear in mind that the EU is still struggling with the manifold (political, economic, financial, cultural and military) implications and the repercussions of the ambitious enlargement and deepening of the European integration process since the collapse of the Berlin Wall in November 1989.



Thus, it is yet too early to claim that, among other things, the process of harmonization of the military capabilities as well as the doctrines of the western European countries and those of the formerly central and eastern European countries has been fully achieved.

True, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary and others have modernized and upgraded their military arsenals and they have raised a whole new generation of military officers and commanders who are trained and educated in accordance with the NATO standards since their admittance into the Alliance in the mid-1990s.

But, it should not be forgotten that, even the North Atlantic Alliance is still far from being perfect in reaching interoperability among its decades-old members.

Fighting a war is a serious undertaking that requires more than perfect cohesion among the allies. Hence, it wouldn't be wrong to argue that the EU has still many yards to get there.

On the other hand, Turkey, which is used to be the second largest military power in NATO, has proven, time and again, its capabilities as well as willingness to commit to tough military operations, the last two of which have already been seen in northern Syria under the "Euphrates Shield" as well as the "Olive Branch" operations lately.

Therefore, the EU should understand and clearly acknowledge that, Turkey's insistence in getting involved in at least the initial phases of the decision-making process concerning the possible uses of the European Army in operations outside of the EU territory does not stem from ideological dispositions of Turkish authorities.

What Turkish authorities want is simply to protect Turkey's supreme national interests while also displaying the readiness of the country to do the same for its European allies now and, hopefully partners, in the future. Nothing more! ■