

Hellenic Electronic Center (HEC) A Non-Profit Organization Registered in the U S with 38,000 Hellenes as members and 36 Hellenic associations in the US and abroad

November 6th, 2009

David Schenker's November 5 article on Turkey describes the anti-Western shift in Turkish policies and laments the alleged inability of the Kemalists to reverse the process under way in Turkey. In addition,

Mr. Schenker falsely attributes the creation of a so called "democratic" State to dictator Mustafa Kemal.

As a Greek Orthodox Christian, I maintain the hope that westerners would recognize not only the

political realities in Turkey, but the historical ones as well. The historical figure of Kemal was a war

criminal who presided over the mass extermination of Greeks, Assyrians, and Armenians in Anatolia.

Mr. Schenker is correct when he suggests a worst case scenario be envisioned for Turkey. Such a

scenario should include containment of Turkey and support for neighboring countries menaced by

Ankara such as Greece, Armenia, and Cyprus. The ongoing Turkish

occupation of Cyprus established

through brute force with the aim of pursuing Turkish expansionist claims is a threat not only to the

peaceful government of Cyprus and its citizens, but to the United States and Israel as well. The

Islamicization of Cyprus has been in effect long before the ascent of the Erdogan government through

the systematic destruction of Greek Orthodox and Armenian Churches and the settlement of Muslim

settlers in the homes of Greek Cypriot refugees.

Mr. Schenker expresses concern that a new plane may come under the control of the Erdogan government.

It is a pity that Western governments never expressed concern for the arming of Turkey's leaders from

the period when Kemal himself was provided with weaponry for use in the slaughter of Christian civilians

by the European powers to the early period of the NATO alliance when the Menderes government ordered

a pogrom against Turkey's Greek Orthodox minority in 1955. Mr. Schenker should also take note that

the Kemalist officers whom he extols have been actively promoting a campaign of terror and harassment

against his holiness the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.

Turkey's turn against the West should not be surprising. The Christians (and Kurds) who have been on the

receiving end of Turkey's racist and expansionist policies have understood through the tears of suffering

and mourning what Western admirers of Kemal have sought to deny: that Turkey has always been a

brutal regime and thoroughly Jihadist underneath the surface.

Theodoros Karakostas
HEC Executive Committee

Ankara's Islamist government is turning away from the Western alliance.

By DAVID SCHENKER

The European Union has long debated the merits of Turkish EU membership. But now, nearly a decade after Islamists took the reins of power in Ankara, the central question is no longer whether Turkey should be integrated into Europe's economic and political structure, but rather whether Turkey should remain a part of the Western defense structure.

Recent developments suggest that while Turkey's military leadership remains committed to the state's secular, Western orientation and the defining principles of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the civilian

Islamist government led by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) seems to have different ideas. Ankara is increasingly pursuing illiberal policies at home, for instance by attacking independent media, while aligning itself with militant, anti-western Middle East regimes abroad.

The latest demonstration of Ankara's political shift was its cancellation last month of Israel's long-standing participation in NATO military exercises in Turkey. Even worse, on the same day Israel was disinvited, Turkey announced imminent military exercises with Syria, a member of the U.S. list of "State Sponsors of Terrorism." These developments came just weeks after Ankara and Damascus established a "senior strategic cooperation council." These developments could signal the beginning of the end of Turkey's close military and economic cooperation with the Jewish state.

[View Full Image](#)



Associated Press

Mr. Erdogan's new strategic partner Syria's Bashar Assad

Ankara is simultaneously moving closer to the mullocracy in Tehran, even though the Islamic Republic is undermining stability in Afghanistan and Iraq by providing insurgents in both countries with explosives that are killing NATO and U.S. soldiers. The Iranian regime is also threatening to annihilate Israel, the very state Turkey is now distancing itself from. And yet Turkey and Iran have signed several security cooperation agreements over the past few years, and just two months ago, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan hinted he would

oppose sanctions against Iran, saying he "firmly believe[d] that the international community's concern over Iran's nuclear program should be eased." This past June, Turkish President Abdullah Gul was among the first to call Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to congratulate him on his fraudulent re-election.

Meanwhile at home, individual liberty and rule of law have gone by the wayside. The Islamist government in an effort to silence critics attempts to bankrupt the independent and secularist Turkish media through extra-legal tax fines. The AKP government has also targeted political opponents by arresting them on dubious charges of attempting to overthrow the government.

Ankara's dramatic policy transformation seems inconsistent with the fundamental values that underpin the alliance. NATO partners are bound by the principles articulated in the 1949 charter, which affirm member states' "desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments...[a] determin[ation] to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law." Member states are also committed to "seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area."

As Ankara's politics shift, Turkey's willingness to take on politically difficult NATO missions could also diminish, bringing into question the commitment to "collective defense." While Turkey has deployed troops to the NATO mission in Afghanistan, it's unclear that Ankara would support NATO efforts to stem Russian pressure westward in Latvia or Lithuania. Judging from Turkey's equivocal position on Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia, it seems unlikely that Turkey today would even consent to training missions in the Baltic States. Justifying his tilt toward Moscow, Mr. Erdogan said "we have an important trade volume [with Russia]. We would act in line with what Turkey's national interests require."

While Ankara's politics have changed, the military's pro-Western disposition reportedly has not. But over the past decade, the dynamics between the politicians and the general staff have been transformed. For better or worse, Western pressures have compelled the Turkish military to remain in the barracks, and refrain from interfering in political developments. Today, the Turkish military can do little but watch as the secular, democratic, pro-Western republic established by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in the early 1900s is undermined.

While it's still too early to write Turkey out of NATO, in the not so distant future, the alliance will reach a decision point. In 2014, NATO's next generation fighter plane, the Joint Strike Fighter, will be delivered. Given the direction of Turkish politics, serious questions must be asked about whether the Islamist government in Ankara can be trusted with the highly advanced technology.

It's time that NATO start thinking about a worst case scenario in Turkey. For even if the increasingly Islamist state remains a NATO partner, at best, it seems Turkey will be an unreliable partner. Since the 1930s, the country has been a model of modernization and moderation in the Middle East. But absent a remarkable turnaround, it would appear that the West is losing Turkey. Should this occur, it would constitute the most dramatic development in the region since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Mr. Schenker is director of the Program in Arab Politics at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704013004574517210622936876.html>

