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Obama –Turkey, NATO and the EU

Op-Ed
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By Gene Rossides
 May 19, 2009

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The traditional 100 days honeymoon for a new president was reached in late April. Most public opinion polls give President Obama solid marks for his first 100 days, primarily for domestic affairs.

The European reaction to Obama's first overseas trip to Europe and Turkey, April 1 - 8 varied from favorable for his emphasis on partnership at the G-20 economic summit in London, to mixed regarding NATO and the EU.

NATO

The reaction to Obama at the NATO meeting in Strasburg, France was mixed. Turkey's Prime Minister Erodogan attacked the nomination of Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen as the next NATO secretary-general because Rasmussen strongly supported freedom of speech for the Danish cartoonist who drew unflattering images in 2005 of the Muslim prophet Mohammed.

The fact that Obama decided to help broker a deal with Erdogan to support the Danish Prime Minister in return for two NATO jobs and a promise to unblock two chapters of its EU accession requirements, instead of opposing Erdongan's anti-freedom of speech position, can be characterized as appeasement of Turkey.

The failure of the U.S. and other members of NATO to stand up to Turkey's blackmail tactics has harmed the cohesiveness of NATO. They could have told Turkey to support Rasmussen or face suspension from NATO because of Turkey's aggression in Cyprus, a continuing violation of the NATO treaty.

European Union

At the EU summit on April 5, in Prague, President Obama stressed U.S. support for Turkey's accession to the EU. Obama's comments were attacked by French President Nicholas Sarkozy who said, "I have been working hard with President Obama, but when it comes to the European Union it's up to member states of the European Union to decide on membership...I have always been opposed to this entry, and I remain opposed."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Sarkozy on May 10, 2009 at a meeting in Berlin objected to the inclusion of Turkey in the EU's enlargement. They argued that any misguided expansion might endanger its operational effectiveness, and it should stop making empty promises to Turkey. Merkel and Sarkozy reiterated their support for "privileged partnership" as an alternative framework to regulate Turkish –EU relations (Deutsche Presse Agentur, May 10, 2009).

Obama and U.S. Policy towards Turkey

Obama needs to rethink U.S. policy towards Turkey. His reiteration of State Department policy without a critical review damaged his image in Europe.

First, he should understand it is up to the EU members to decide on its membership.

Secondly, he should ask: "Is full membership or a privileged partnership for Turkey better for U.S. interests?" In my view, a privileged partnership on security and economic matters is far preferable for U.S. interests. Full membership with voting rights and free movement of people would seriously damage the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the EU. In a few decades the most populous nation in the EU would be 99% Muslim Turkey and would alter the demographics of Europe to the detriment of its

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Third, he should support the rule of law and oppose aggression by calling for the immediate removal of all illegal Turkish military forces and illegal Turkish settlers from Cyprus.

I assume that the privileged partnership would still require Turkey to meet the full conditions for accession, the *acquis communautaire*, democratic norms, all Turkish military forces and illegal settlers out of Cyprus, and recognition of the Republic of Cyprus including the opening of Turkish ports and airports to Cypriot planes and ships and other conditions.

Turkey-anti-Christian and anti-Semitic

Turkey was the leading anti-Christian nation in the 20th century killing over 2,500,000 Christians and expelling another 1,500,000 Christians under a forced exchange of populations. And it was and is a major anti-Semitic nation.

Modern Turkey emerged from the Ottoman Empire on the ashes of genocide and to this day is in a continuing state of denial of its genocides against Armenian, Greek, and Assyrian Christians.

Until Turkey recognizes and acknowledges its genocides and crimes against humanity and compensates its victims, as Germany has done, it will not become a full-fledged member of the community of civilized nations.

Turkey has a history of unreliability as an ally during and after the Cold War.

President Obama should read the comments on Turkey by distinguished foreign policy analysts such as Ted Galen Carpenter, Vice President for Foreign Policy and Defense Studies, CATO Institute, Doug Bandow, Fellow, American Conservative Defense Alliance, Greg Copley, strategic analyst and others.

The State Department's appeasement of Turkey and failure to apply the rule of law to Turkey's aggression and occupation in Cyprus has damaged and continue to damage U.S. interests.

Community Action Needed

Write and call President Obama and urge him to critically review and reverse State's harmful policy towards Turkey, and to follow the Eisenhower doctrine of applying the rule of law to friends and foes alike.

Contact the President as follows:

President Barack Obama
 The White House
 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
 Washington, DC 20500
 Tel. 202-456-1111 (Comments)
 202-456-1414 (Main Switchboard)
 Fax: 202-456-2461
 E-mail: comments@whitehouse.gov

Send copies to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, National Security Adviser General James Jones, (Ret.) and Congress.

Gene Rossides, founder of the
 American Hellenic Institute and
 former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury

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