

# GEARS OF DIPLOMACY: TURKEY JOINING THE EQUATION

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The economic and human cost of Russias occupation of Ukraine is increasing by the day. Ukraines inability to receive sufficient support against this invasion and being left to its fate, NATOs observance of the trajectory of the war instead of immediately taking military and economic measures to end the invasion and, ultimately, its choice to pursue a policy of debilitating Russia with minor sanctions are noteworthy observations. Moreover, European countries policies of placing priority on ensuring of energy continuity rather than supporting Ukraines territorial integrity have disappointed Ukraine and further discouraged the countries that were intending to pursue policies against Russia. On the other hand, Europes exclusionary and racist approach displayed towards the refugees and asylum seekers is one of the important implications of this ordeal. The recovery of the EU and NATO with this war, despite this not bearing any benefit for Ukraine, is among the first prominent outcomes. The US Press Secretary has confirmed this approach with the following statement; President Putin has been one of the greatest unifiers of NATO in modern history, so I guess that is one thing we can thank him for.[1] Indeed, NATO has now become more united and influential on account of Russia, however, one must remember that this also signifies the strengthening of the US within NATO.

Apart from the EUs and NATOs recovery, it is probable that the EU will cooperate with the US along the Atlanticist line and this will be evaluated as the Russian threat discourse finally finding a response. Indeed, the EU switches trajectory by acting in unison with the US whenever European security cannot be ensured. Thus, the US has obtained a significant achievement with regards to the re-establishing of its power and influence within NATO and the EU. On the other hand, the Germany-based interaction between

Russia and Europe has been curbed to a considerable degree. Germany has shifted from its indecisive stance during the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war to revising its energy cooperation with Russia.[2] Germany has also ceased the certification process of the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline, which the US has opposed for a long time.[3] It also declared the commitment to double its defense spending[4] and accepted sending weapons to Ukraine.[5] Finally, German President Frank Walter Steinmeier stated that there will be no going back to normal with Russia under the rule of President Putin.[6] From the perspective of the US, these developments also indicate the end of opposition or resistance from Europe. The third goal for the US is gravitating towards the Asia-Pacific region where China is at the center. And now, by re-establishing its power in Europe and gaining the support of the European states, the US will be able to gain a position that is serious, adequate, deterrent, and effective against China in the Asia-Pacific. Previously, the European states did not take the Russian threat as seriously as the US or were unable to fully display the resoluteness to cut off economic ties. In addition, they were not as displeased as the US with regards to China expanding into the inner regions of Europe through investments and unquestioned loans. This is because every country in international relations is focused on maximizing its interests, even if the countries are allied together. Therefore, until the invasion of Ukraine, the EU was not refraining from improving relations with China and Russia, which the US deems as threats against its superpower status.

Russias attack against Ukraine has caused the European countries to perceive the security issue much more seriously and, similarly to every case in which European security could not be assured, to gravitate back to acting in accordance with the US. The opportunity to measure Russias military power and weaken the Russian economy is also among the aspects that the US considers as beneficial in this ordeal.

**Turkeys Place in Regional Security**

One of the outcomes of the Russia-Ukraine war has been Turkey rising to prominence through its diplomatic maneuvers and Turkeys importance in the European security structure being recognized once again. Turkey plays a significant role, as part of its raison dêtre, in ensuring security in the Black and Mediterranean Seas and stability in the Balkans. This role aligns with the European security understanding and is gaining importance for Europe as well. Furthermore, Turkey is also considered the closest safe country for the people fleeing from instability and conflicts in the near abroad. Turkey being a safe country has led to it bearing the brunt of the immigration waves, which the EU deems to be a security gap, and in this respect, to the EU viewing Turkey as an influential party in fulfilling its security, stability and economic concerns stemming from the refugees and asylum seekers. Moreover, Turkey also provides energy security by way of carrying alternative energy lines. All these factors make Turkey a part of Europes security and the Russia-Ukraine war has emphasized this attribute of Turkey. The wish to exclude Turkey from all these equations will lead to a security gap, resulting in Europe leaning towards US leadership. In this context, perhaps Greece to a certain extent being turned into a US base is not an attempt to fill Turkeys place through Greece. Professional

geopolitics experts will be able to predict that Greece will not be able to bear this burden. Perhaps the bases in Greece need to be considered together with the current Bondsteel Base in Kosovo and the operational US base being established in Albania, and these should be considered as the US safeguard provided against the security gap that will form/is forming with Turkey being excluded. In both cases, the Russia-Ukraine war has demonstrated that Turkey is situated in the middle of many equations and that it effectively plays its role as a part of NATOs and the EUs security.

Thus, the process that started with Russias invasion of Ukraine will neither end with the embargo implemented against Russia[7], nor with Russias military operations against Ukraine. The moderate foreign policy[8] that Turkey has implemented since the beginning of the war and Turkeys ability to play a facilitating role in having both countries sit at the table is the most important development that gives hope for the wars end. Turkey has played an efficient role in the crisis that has been compared to the events that started the Second World War. This has happened despite attempts to exclude it from all plans just before the war, the plans to fill its place with Greece, the articles encouraging the reduction of its influence and power in the Balkans that were written starting in 2018[9], and being the target of attempts to alter the Balkan politics from scratch. Presently, with Putins war having given birth to geopolitical Europe[10], a change in the European states perception of Turkey is also occurring. Aside from transitioning to green energy, reducing energy dependency, digital development, chapters of political goals, aims and unity of abilities for Europe, Turkey will be wanted to be kept in the equation for the sake of increasing the security and defense capacity, which is another one of the duties the EU has imposed on itself after the war in Ukraine. If the war in Ukraine is truly changing the global system, then Turkey has already taken its place in the world.

**Turkeys Influence and Role In the Balkans**

One of the people who understood Turkeys role in the regions and Europes security even before the war in Ukraine started was Wolfgang Ischinger, who made a statement that day as the Chairman of the Munich Security Conference.[11] He stated that he wished for Turkey, which he emphasized holds significant importance for the peace and security of the entire West through its strategic location, to remain in NATO and not to do what the UK did to the EU.[12] In his statement, Ischinger expressed the importance of sustaining close relations as much as possible with Turkey despite the recent crises and differences of opinion and pointed out Turkeys role in the Black Sea security and that partnership with Turkey would increase the effectiveness of Europes policies concerning the Near East, Middle East and Iran. He conveyed that the increasing the effectiveness of European policies is also relevant for the Balkans, where Turkey also plays an important role. Ischinger underlined that Turkey bears a very great importance and even central significance concerning these matters.

These explanations are essential, however, the statements above being uttered by German diplomat Ischinger is both interesting and can be interpreted as an admission or a change in attitude/discourse or an enlightenment in the face of developments. This would

be due to Ischinger sharing the view of the US of neutralizing Turkey in the Balkans in his article on the EUs aim of democracy, peace and stability in its near abroad.[13] Indeed, the document titled Balkans Forward: A New US Strategy for the Region[14] published in 4 November 2017 by the Atlantic Council, which is an institution affiliated with the US Department of State, was actually initially aiming to neutralize Russia and China in the Balkans. However, Turkey was afterwards included within this framework. However, the Balkans coming under the total influence of the US would signify not only Russia, China, and Turkey losing its influence here, but Germany as well, leading to the disruption of regional balances.[15] On the other hand, Ischinger had also displayed attempts to estrange Turkey from the Balkans in 1995 during the talks for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ischinger served as the Chairman of the German Delegation during the Bosnian Peace talks in Dayton/Ohio in 1995, the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1996/1997, and the Kosovo crisis in 1998. During the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the Peace Implementation Conference was held in London on 8-9 December 1995 to ensure the sustainability of the agreement. Moreover, it was decided in the conference to establish a Peace Implementation Council. At the same time, a Steering Board was formed to work under the High Representatives presidency as an executive organ of the Council.[16] Members of the Steering Board consist of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the UK, the US, the Presidency of the European Union, the European Commission, and Turkey as the representative of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The fact that, while all the other members were a part of the Board with state status, Turkey being included on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference was the result of Ischinger's exclusionary stance.

Ischingers approach reminds us of the stance of those who failed to act during the period of the 1992-1995 Bosnian War due to not wanting a Muslim country in the middle of Europe and those who are currently implementing plans to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina between Serbia and Croatia with the same motive. While Turkey is wanted to be reduced to the role of an Islamic country, Turkey has repeatedly proven that it is far beyond this in terms of capacity. Turkey looked out for all of the Wests security interests and compensated for Europes and US deficiencies during the 2008-2010 period by contributing to the normalization between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, as well as facilitating the talks between Ukraine and Russia. All of these are contributions that Turkey has made for the peace, stability, and democracy in Turkeys near European region. This role played by Turkey has demonstrated Turkeys significance not only in the geopolitical sense, but in the diplomatic sense through its traditional foreign policy in political crises. In conclusion, Turkey is supporting the security, peace and stability in its regions and cannot be hindered even when attempts are made to prevent it from carrying out this role.

[1] Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki, *US White House*, 28 February 2022, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2022/02/28/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-jen-psaki-february-28-2022/ (Accessed 01.04.2022)

[2] Russia currently sells about 70% of its gas to the EU and earns some 35 billion Dollars a year from these exports. Ben Aris, Winners and Losers Fram The War in Ukraine and Russia, *Intellinews*, 16 March 2022, https://www.intellinews.com/long-read-winners-and-losers-from-the-war-in-ukraine-and-russia-has-already-lost-even-if-it-wins-238306/

[3] Germany freezes Nord Stream 2 gas project as Ukraine crisis deepens, *Reuters*, 22 February 2022, https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/germanys-scholz-halts-nord-stream-2-certification-2022-02-22/

[4] Germany commits □□□□ billion to defense spending,*Deutsche Welle*, 21 February 2022, https://www.dw.com/en/germany-commits-100-billion-to-defense-spending/a-60933724

[5] Poland, along with Germany, began sending munitions by land to Ukraine; Estonia and Latvia began transporting fuel, Javelin armored weapons, and medical supplies; Czechia announced that it will send weapons and munition, Slovakia announced that it will send munition, diesel and kerosene, the Netherlands announced that it will send 200 Stinger anti-aircraft defense systems to Ukraine, and Belgium announced that it will provide 2,000 machine guns and 3,800 tons of fuel. Germany to send Ukraine weapons in historic shift on military aid, *Politico*, 26 Februrary 2022, https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-war-russia-germany-still-blocking-arms-supplies/ ; Richard Haass, Winners and Losers in Putins War, *Project Syndicate*, 30 March 2022, https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/winners-and-losers-in-russia-ukraine-war-by-richard-haass-2022-03

[6] Almanya Cumhurbaşkanından Putin ile normale dönüş olmayacak mesajı, *TRT*, 5 Nisan 2022, https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/almanya-cumhurbaskanindan-putin-ile-normale-donus-olmayacak-mesaji-669908.html (Accessed 01.04.2022)

[7] The real cost of sanctions has been to reduce Russias growth potential to a mere 2% □ well below the global growth rate. Aris, Winners and Losers Fram The War in Ukraine and Russia.

[8] German Chancellor Olaf Scholz meets with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan amid Ukraine crisis, *Deutsche Welle*, 14 March 2022, https://www.dw.com/en/german-chancellor-olaf-scholz-meets-with-turkish-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-amid-ukraine-crisis/a-61115091

[9] George Soros and Alexander Soros, In the Balkans, a Chance to Stabilize Europe, *The New York Times*, 18 June 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/18/opinion/northern-macedonia-rename-greece.html ; Wolfgang Ischinger, German reunification and peace in Europe, 9 November 2019, https://securityconference.org/news/meldung/german-reunification-and-peace-in-europe/

[10] The phrase is used in reference to Josep Borrell's article "Putin's War Has Given Birth to Geopolitical Europe". For the article: Josep Borrell, Putins War Has Given Birth to Geopolitical Europe, *Project Syndicate*, 3 March 2022, https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/geopolitical-europe-responds-to-russias-war-by-josep-borrell-2022-03 (Accessed 05.03.2022)

[11] Ischinger served as the Chairman of the Munich Security Conferences from 2008 until the last conference in 2022. After the 58th Security Conference on 18-20 February 2022, during which the security conference attendees discussed war and peace for three days, Ischinger left the chairmanship to Christoph Heusgen. Since taking over the conference in 2008, Ischinger had made the conference a household name with a team of around 80 employees and an annual budget of more than ten million Euros. Holger Möhle, Christoph Heusgen übernimmt Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz, Gestählt für lange Nächte, *Rheinische Post*, 20 February 2022, https://rp-online.de/politik/ausland/ex-un-botschafter-heusgen-nun-vorsitzender-der-sicherheitskonferenz_aid-66426413 (Accessed 01.04.2022). On the other hand, Ischinger is also described as a former government official who, after leaving his post, has sold his services to the highest bidder. He is also criticized for using the connections he made through the Munich Security Conferences to increase the value of stocks in consulting companies. For example, Kosovo, Georgia, and Qatar are clients of Agora Strategy Group, a boutique consultancy company established by Ischinger in 2015. The company generates revenues of between 2-3 million Euros per year and Agora customers have in common a connection with the Munich Security Conference. Ischinger is also on the board of Hensoldt, which pays him approximately 60,000 Euros per year, and has secured this companys place by making it the main sponsor of the Munich Security Conference. Regarding this topic, see In diplomacy, Europes most powerful ambassador means business, *Politico*, 16 February 2022, https://www.politico.eu/article/diplomacy-wolfgang-ischinger-munich-security-conference/

[12] Ischinger: Türkiye bize Hadi, hoşça kalın dememeli, *Deutsche Welle*, 9 Şubat 2022, https://www.dw.com/tr/ischinger-t%C3%BCrkiye-bize-hadi-ho%C5%9F%C3%A7a-kal%C4%B1n-dememeli/a-60704332 (Accessed 01.04.2022)

[13] Ischinger, German reunification and peace in Europe.

[14] Новая стратегия США на Балканах, *Top War*, 4 December 2017, https://tr.topwar.ru/131154-novaya-strategiya-ssha-na-balkanah.html (Accessed 25.11.2021)

[15] Ischinger defends the viewpoint that Our reliance on US military capabilities is absolutely necessary for the security of Germany and Europe in the short, medium and long term. We are blind, deaf and powerless without our American partner. See the interview with Munich Security Conference Chairman Wolfgang Ischinger, *Ouest-France*, 9 February 2019, http://www.senat.fr/rap/r18-626-2/r18-626-2_mono.html

[16] Bosnia and Herzegovina 1998: Self-sustaining Structures, *OHR-BiH*, 12 November 1997, http://www.ohr.int/pic-bonn-conclusions/#11

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