



TOPICAL DIALOGUES

A "Region" Research Center Project

TOPICAL DIALOGUES ON SECURITY

INTERNATIONAL PRESS-CENTER “DIALOGUE”

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ONLINE PRESS-CONFERENCES FOR ARMENIAN MEDIA



GENERAL TOPICS OF PRESS CONFERENCES

NATO Summit - 2016

Features of cooperation between NATO and the South Caucasus countries

Regions of NATO responsibility as an organization of collective security

The principles of NATO activities in a worsening global security situation

Russia factor for NATO agenda

NATO's fight against international terrorism: achievements and problems



From the online press conference with political scientist ALEXANDER RAHR (Germany)

26.07. 2016

On the fight against international terrorism

- NATO will not and cannot deal with the terrorism within Europe. This is done by the police. In addition, reliance is placed on cooperation of special services here. I think that information exchange has increased. NATO announced that it is not leaving Afghanistan that it is going to fight against international terrorism there. I do not rule out the probability that NATO is preparing for intervention to Libya, where ISIS has relocated its headquarters. NATO is still fighting ISIS in Syria.
- Russia is not considered as a threat in Germany, while in Poland and Baltic states it is. NATO must first understand itself, understand what it wants. I think that after the terrorist attacks in Germany, German elites may change their critical point of view towards Russia and look for cooperation more intensely.
- Yes, you can feel tension in the society. I think soon there will be more police, camcorders will be everywhere, guilty foreigners will be expelled more quickly and the illegal possession of weapons will be severely punished. If the terroristic actions will not stop, Germany will take the path of Israel. The right wing and nationalist parties will gain momentum. Merkel's open-door policy is losing popularity. Other European countries have negative feelings towards Merkel. While the latter wanted to put herself a historical monument, replacing the "last wall" of Europe (meaning the fence in Hungary against the influx of migrants).

On the relations between NATO and Russia

- NATO will not go to South Caucasus region. Security issues will be settled there within the frameworks of the OSCE, that is, in cooperation with Russia, whose perception of NATO is hostile. I am sure that European Union-Eurasian Union dialogue will start soon.

- NATO does not want to fight against Russia. Warsaw NATO Summit was held for the Baltic States and Poland. It was just a demonstration of solidarity to these countries that tremble in front of Russia, and nothing more. NATO parallel follows a policy of open doors towards Russia, because the creation of stable multipolar architecture of the world is not possible without Russia. However, of course there is some aggravation in Ukraine. A real war may break out there, and the West cannot let it happen. In South Caucasus, a fire over Nagorno-Karabakh conflict may spark out. However, I do not see the role of NATO there. Georgia will be accepted to NATO only if it settles its territorial disputes with Russia. This can be done by recognizing the independence of Abkhazia, but this is something Georgia is not going to do for many years. I hope that in the end we will build a joint security space from Lisbon to Vladivostok. There should be no hostility within that space; all the conflicts should be settled. Then, within the frameworks of that space separate military blocks like NATO, CSTO and SCO can exist.

About Turkey as a NATO member

- ... Turkey is playing an independent geopolitical game in Eurasia, somewhere in separate from NATO.
- I did not think it possible (the exclusion of Turkey from NATO), but now I consider that kind of development quiet possible.
- West puts a lot of pressure on Turkey so that it does not come off the way of democratization. There already are calls on imposing sanctions against Turkey. While Erdogan now suspects USA in supporting the coup against him. He recalled the pouch of 1980. However, West is not going to break the relations with the Turks. Turkey is the main ally of Germany in addressing the refugee crisis.

Full version of the material here: <http://www.regioncenter.info/en/node/1462>



**From the internet press conference of senior
Researcher of Ankara Policy Center
BURCU GULTEKIN PUNSMANN
(Turkey)**

02.08.2016

About Turkey after coup attempt

- This is a terrible test for all Turkish citizens, our democracy and our institutions. Thanks God, the criminal attempt failed. Turkey would have been pushed into a terrible civil war. Could you imagine, what it would have meant for the region, I am including into this region, Armenia as well of course. We have already too many failed states and civil wars in the Middle East. The government hasn't become stronger. How can one feel stronger while facing so many stories of betrayal within your very close circle? This a national test. The EU – especially France where the state of emergency has just been extended for an additional period of 6 months- and the US should support us throughout these difficult times.
- The population is still traumatized, so many people have their personal stories from the dreadful night of 15 July where they had to face and struggle against those whose only duty is to protect the nation. My district in Ankara was at the epicenter of the air attacks...This is our own 9/11. Don't expect too much compassion for those who were affected in the aftermaths of the attempt.

On Turkey's policy in the matter of migrants

- Turkey is home at 2.5 million of registered Syrian refugees. The total number of Syrian nationals living in Turkey should probably be even higher. As of today Turkey is the second country, after Syria, with the highest number of Syrian nationals. The main objective of the agreement reached with the EU is to reach lives, stop the Eagean from being a mass grave. Turkey learned how to use conditionality in its relations with the EU from the EU itself...so many unrelated issues have been bound together in the EU-Turkey relations unfortunately...

About Turkey as a NATO member

- That's a wrong perception (Turkey plays geopolitical games independent from NATO in Eurasia). Please tell me what precisely NATO's strategy in Eurasia is. Decisions within NATO are taken by consensus. And as Turkey is a full fledged NATO member, no decision that Turkey doesn't agree with will come out from the decision making body of NATO.

On the Turkish-Russian relations

- I am convinced that the Turkish-Russian crisis had a negative effect on the South Caucasus at large and the dynamics of the NK conflict in particular. Considered from the Turkish perspective, this crisis made Turkish-Azerbaijani energy relations looked even more valuable. Turkey doesn't have the possibility to impact directly on the dynamics of the NK conflict, and especially in the context of a resumption of hostilities. I would say that the Russian anti-Turkey propaganda campaign had a negative impact on the Armenian public opinion. Well, as Armenians' fear of Turks increases, their policy options decreases proportionately.
- I wish to believe that the warming of relations between Moscow and Ankara is if a long term nature as you say. Both countries have seen what it costs them to sever their relations. The economic cost is minimal compared to the strategic cost both for Russia and Turkey. The Turkish-Russian bilateral relations matter for the future of our region. We should however bear in mind the reason why the unthinkable happened between Turkey and Russia: Syria. Turkey and Russia need to have a common ground in Syria that would save lives and respect the will of the Syrian people.

Full version of the material here: <http://www.regioncenter.info/en/node/1467>



From the internet press-conference with the Director of the Center for Conflict Prevention and Early Warning, former Advisor to the President of Romania IULIAN CHIFU (Romania)

16.08.2016

On the fight against international terrorism

- As any member state of the EU, NATO and the West, if not as any state, there is a certain level of risk. Being member of the anti-IS coalition (the international coalition against Daesh, self proclaimed Islamic State), the level of exposure is more important. On the other hand, Romania is not a valuable target. At the same time, its security services are well prepared and excellently connected, included with the Middle East partners, and this help them avoid and prevent attacks. So the probability of a terrorist attack is quite low.

On the relations between NATO and Russia

- The Russian threat is far more important than the terrorist one since we are talking about a revisionist and revanchist policy and documents naming NATO, the US and EU policies as a threat to their national security. It is a country that has huge strategic capabilities including nuclear ones and the level of ambition to become once again a superpower and rebuilt its former empire under new rules, form and with new instruments in the post Soviet space. It threatens directly both NATO states and new independent states that are NATO partners.
- On the Northern part of the Eastern Flank, the balance is 7:1 for Russia, with 3:1 is a guarantee, in military terms, of a success of an attack. I included here the four battalions. It is true that we are talking about equal technical capabilities and we have to admit that the Alliance capabilities are far more developed and modern. Article 42 of the final declaration is a declaration of solidarity, because any attack against the Baltic States or Poland means already attacking all those multinational troops. In the Southern part of the Eastern Flank, article 43 of the final declaration states the capacity of the Alliance to freely send troops in real time in any of the parts of the alliance where those troops are needed and with the formation of a

multinational brigade was also formed under Romanian framework. And we are not talking only about ground capabilities, but also about air and naval capabilities. In the Black Sea, once again, Russia unilaterally moved huge military capabilities in Crimea and Novorossisk, and the huge level of capabilities is far more important at sea than those of NATO. The only real dominance comes from the capacity of the alliance to move airpower and any type of troops in short time in the area and the capacity of an aircraft carrier sitting in the Aegean Sea to reach any target in the Wide Black Sea Area.

About Turkey as a NATO member

- There's a level of concern and Turkey is questioned about those steps, but nothing dramatic happened. Turkey is a valuable and strong NATO member, it is keeping its position inside the Alliance, it needs the Alliance as NATO needs it, so I won't magnify to much such bilateral developments that didn't reach a strategic level or security or alliances perspectives. It's a rebuild of the former Ankara/Moscow economic ties and discussions about the free action of Turkey inside Syria. But a lot of differences are present between the two capitals.
- In the first case nothing changed in the NATO-Turkey relations. The tensions with US for extraditing Gulen is just a bilateral episode to be considered once the formal request will be filed, and has no impact on NATO's activities where Turkey is involved. By the way, all those commitments are observed by Turkey as a loyal NATO member.

Full version of the material here: <http://www.regioncenter.info/en/node/1470>



From the online press conference of Professor at HSE Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs and leading researcher of IMEMO ALEXEY PORTANSKI (Russia)

20.08.2016

On the Russian - Turkish relations

- Turkey is inside of the zone of geopolitical interests of Russia, besides Moscow's relations with the West are none so good. That is why Turkey appears to be a convenient partner. For Erdogan, in its turn, in view of the complications of his relations with the West, strengthening of the relations with Russia is also important.
- I do not think that it can come to severance of relation with NATO- the USA will not let it happen (unless Donald Trump comes to power there). Today Russia needs Turkey's friendship both economically and geopolitically. Do not forget that unfortunately Russia has very few friends in the world now.

On the attitude of western countries towards Russia

- The West believes that recently Russia has seriously violated international law and illegally annexed the territory of another state, something that has not occurred in Europe since WWII. Hence the feeling of threat from Russia. Nevertheless, West would not want look upon Russia as an enemy, they do not need a confrontation. In addition, many pro-government organizations in the West are now making efforts to ease the tension.

About Turkey as a NATO member

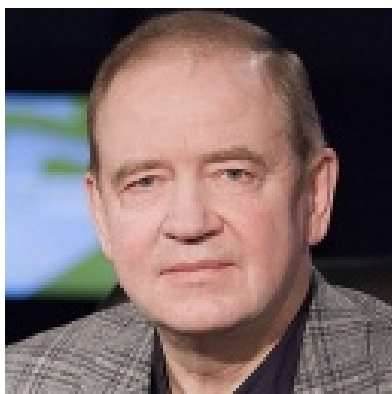
- Every member of the Alliance is valuable for NATO. In addition, the loss of any of the states could serve as a beginning for the destruction of the block-and that is something NATO will try prevent. Turkey is the major country on the southern flank of NATO that has American military bases with nuclear weapons. This is also a value to NATO.

On the European migration policy

- Europe's migration policy is failing just as the policy of multiculturalism. There is a number of reasons for this fail. I would like to highlight one of those. It is very difficult for Europeans to choose between preservation of commitment to their values on the one hand and the necessary restrictions in relation to migrants, on the other. The latter actively use this and in some parts of Europe even try to establish their own ethical standards. The question on the measures Europe should take against international terrorism is very broad.

First, they need to move from words to deeds. This is partially beginning to happen. Actually, Europe should take some lessons from Israel. Cooperation with Russia is very useful in these terms.

Full version of the material here: <http://www.regioncenter.info/en/node/1496>



**From the internet press conference with the
“Anatoly Sobchak Foundation” expert, council
member of the "Growth” Party
SERGEI STANKEVICH (Russia)**

06.09. 2016

On the Russia’s Syrian operations

- Russia needs airbase in Iran only to improve the use of heavy strategic aviation with the expected end of the war in Syria. When flying from Russian Mozdok the bombers are forced to take only the half of the ammunition or do aerial refueling. Both of the mentioned above reduce efficiency. Russia is not seeking for permanent military presence in Iran.

Cooperation with Turkey is necessary for the same purpose: to block the 100 kilometers of the Syrian-Turkish border on Jarablus - Azaz line, through which the replenishment of terrorist groups in Syria with manpower and military equipment is realized. If the border is blocked, the completion of military operation against ISIS and related groups in Syria will be a matter of few months.

On the attitude of western countries towards Russia

- Isolation of Russia turned out impossible. This was confirmed by G20 Summit in China. European allies start to cooperate with Russia more and more closely and even the USA are close to signing deals with Russia over the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine.
- The peak of confrontation between Russia and the West is in the past. Now the phased de-escalation and quitting the sanction war is coming. This will open the way for the new phase of expansion and strengthening of EAU.

On the exclusion of Turkey from NATO

- Such a development is not realistic; it is not going to happen. NATO has a vital interest in keeping Turkey in its ranks. Ankara will even get some additional freedom in exchange for proof of loyalty to the alliance.

On the Russian -Turkish relations

- In a region like Caucasus only the policy of balance of powers and interests may be successful. Turkey is not a typical NATO member- it has a large degree of autonomy, which is going to only increase, just like the role of Turkey in the Region. It is shortsighted and dangerous to disoblige this. Russia has to combine pressure with power political gestures, situational deals and tactical alliances on certain issues. In particular, Russia will try to maintain its strategic dominance over the main post-Soviet area, preventing appearance of any permanent alternative centered of power consolidation.
- Now cooperation between Russia and Turkey is of a situational tactical nature. The end of Syrian conflict will serve as a decisive test. In particular, Turkey's assistance in closing the Syrian-Turkish border on Jarablus-Azaz line. If cooperation in terms of Syrian conflict based on mutual concessions fails, the warming will change into cooling. If it succeeds, Russia will think about further forms of partnership. In any case, Russia will never make its relations with Armenia a subject of trade or exchange. It is impossible by definition.

Full version of the material here: <http://www.regioncenter.info/en/node/1500>