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Turkey's foreign policy displays a messy picture

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Turkey's foreign policy is currently displaying a cluttered picture on two main reasons and processes. First, the impact of the July 2016 coup attempt on Turkey's bilateral and institutional relationships is still in place.

Second - related to the first reason - the upcoming referendum on key constitutional amendments made averting crises with prominent European countries - that are also in election processes - impossible.

Turkey's traditional and long-standing foreign policy is based on two pillars: establishing strong bilateral and institutional bonds with the Western world and sticking to peace through multilateral friendship agreements with regional countries. This policy does also envisage redressing balance between global powers at a pinch and in line with Turkey's national interests.

All of these aspects of well-tried Turkish foreign policy have nearly been abandoned. A rough summary of the performance of the current Turkish foreign policy would tell us that decades-old political and diplomatic investment into the European Union and Europe in general no longer promise a long-term partnership for a sound and productive cooperation. On the contrary, a thick shadow was cast upon it because of a deep mutual mistrust.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statement that Turkey will review its relationship with the EU after the April 16 referendum only pleased Turkey-skeptics in Europe, far-right politicians and political parties across the continent as well as Turkey's regional rivals, which seek a weaker Turkey in the future.

On ties with the United States, Turkey seems to be disappointed as the new administration under President Donald Trump will unlikely deliver the Turkish government's two top demands. It won't end its alliance with the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its armed wing the People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria. On the extradition of Fethullah Gülen, a self-exiled cleric believed to be the mastermind of the July 2016 coup attempt, Washington will unlikely meet Ankara's demand soon either. It's estimated that the legal case on Gülen's status will not be accomplished in less than three years, if that would begin today.

Turkey's relationship with Russia has two legs: Cooperation in Syria and efforts to normalize bilateral ties. On Syria, a process that was launched with Moscow, led to a fragile ceasefire and the Astana process, with the participation of Iran. Turkey could successfully clear its border of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and allowed the Free Syrian Army (FSA) to get the control of al-Bab.

Both Russians and Americans told Ankara that they won't support any attempt to go further south or the east. In a bid to kill Ankara's plans to launch an offensive toward Manbij where the PYD elements have long been stationed, both Washington and Moscow deployed troops to the region "to deter" Ankara.

Russians have repeated the same move in Afrin, which recently is under PYD control, as part of a series of moves that indicate Moscow's revisited rapprochement with the Syrian Kurdish groups.

It should be noted that the truce in Syria is still very fragile and reports of clashes between the opposition groups and the regime are sufficient to be wary of. Idlib, a northwestern Syrian town, which is very close to the Turkish border, is still home to a number of opposition groups as well as some radical ones and can turn to become the Syrian regime's new target. This scenario will surely cause grave problems to Turkey.

The Turkey-Russia normalization process is also problematic, as the latter still imposes sanctions on Turkish agricultural imports. Russia still has not appointed an ambassador to Ankara after the assassination of former envoy, Andrey Karlov, in late December.

This picture depicts that Turkish foreign policy has major problems to resolve in both eastern and western fronts. Situated on a geographically very important location with full of existentialist problems, Turkey has no luxury to take erroneous steps by weakening its traditional alliances. There is a very urgent need for the recalibration of Turkish foreign policy, if not now, after the referendum.