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Turkey- NATO A Frontline State - The Conservatives and Reformists Summit

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Today, it is an honor for me to join the fastest going political movement- AECR on this intellectual and spiritual venue where we all share the mutual needs for better human beings with the presence of freedom fighters and politicians who do not give commands, but invent, create, and nurture a free person, free world, and a free nation. But it is going to be somehow hard when I go back to reality and see the other “political model” of suppression and marginalization for youth. This assures that freedom, free nation, liberty, dignity, and humanity is worth fighting for. My ten minutes speech will tackle Turkey: NATO frontline state.

Is Turkey abandoned or priorities changed? Was Turkey a necessity to counter the threat of the Soviet Union and the communist expansion, and now different challenges gave the path for different reactions? Is Article 5 that commits allies to come to the aid of any member of the alliance suffering an armed attack not applicable with the belt of hostilities surrounding Turkey and changing the order in Middle East? To what extent is national security and community security prioritized? In other words is Turkey still, with all these strategic changes, a frontline state as it was when NATO had been established?

Since 1949, when it was formed as a shield against the Soviet Union, NATO passed from being a security community to be serving the mission of borderless collective defense and humanitarian intervention. Turkey played an important role in closing the south door to Russian expansion; it was a strategic asset in the Middle East that shifted from a flank country to a frontline country during the first Gulf war in 1991 and its position moved from functional ally to a strategic partner.

Now it is 2016, the mess in the Middle brought a different scenario to the platform. Many challenges emerged creating a debate with the role of Turkey “regionally and internationally”. The country’s NATO membership is definitely a central topic in the debate. Some argue that NATO membership has “fettered” Turkey’s independence, while others see the alliance as a vital “anchor” that has held Turkey in the Western bloc.

Turkey must have real strategies to undermine the threats to its internal security; on the other hand it must strengthen its ties with NATO and EU partners. It has to maintain its historical and present role as a central power in the Middle East, but it must necessarily deal with the new risks emanating from its neighboring countries and cooperate in defusing the regional threats. Of course this is not an easy task.

In reality, the collapse of the regional order had its impact on stability. Perhaps there is no other member in NATO that is deeply affected by the chaos as Turkey is. The country is in a critical position: The war in Syria and Iraq, the massive amount of refugees, the expanding roles for Iran, Russia's and Hezbollah with the Assad regime created a ring in this area. Turkey is drawn into a straight position in the struggle between Iran and Sunni regimes in the Gulf who are in Alliance.

However, the terrorist attacks made a point that Turkey is in the eye of the storm, and indeed in the sight of terrorist groups.

This makes a clear statement: "Turkey is in the frontline" but we have not witnessed a real strategic steps to avoid the influx of these challenges.

And this in turn preceded leads to another question: Is Turkey now being pulled away from NATO, or is it a need for Turkey to still be an active and influential member that benefit as much as possible from such membership?

I believe that Turkey's security is one aspect of wider security policy. Despite the acknowledgments that Turkey's leaders have no intention of undermining NATO's cohesiveness and effectiveness, and the NATO's declaration that asserts on Turkey's position in NATO, where strongly condemns the terrorist attacks against Turkey, affirming that "the security of the Alliance is indivisible". However, it placed its support for Turkey in the context of the international struggle against terrorism without real strategies.

There is a feeling that members of the NATO alliance do not take security considerations seriously enough. The agreement to deploy missiles was set for days but then was hanged out, although the challenges and the threatening for security and territorial integrity are still emanating. This of course needs to be overlooked by the rest of NATO. Turkey is going to be needed as the local bouncer in the Middle East to balance out the power equations.

The formula is clear: There is no strong safe Turkey if there is no strong, democratic and stable neighborhood. That is why there is a great need for grass roots building platform in the surrounding areas.

Personally, I came from a country that is suffering from its weakness, and inability to manage its internal issues with all the absence for the constitutional and institutional organizations “No presidency in Lebanon, No alteration of power for the parliament, no effective or efficient government, and even non trusted judicial authority. Even if Lebanon has been called the homeland of freedom, it cannot build a strong free state if there is no strong democratic system based on inclusiveness not only acceptance, plurality and democratization, based on empowering the grass roots and civil society, and strengthening the un biased judicial system that guarantees fair justice and accountability.

I’m a woman who came from Arab Middle East which is suffering from the absence of the Rule of Law. We have weak systems that come from repression and resistance for this suppression, from corruption where resources that have its way to defense and military to ensure safety where we had never have the feeling of being safe?

For all these reasons we need to reconsider strategies that have been presented till this moment. The Military actions and reactions have never been the solution, what is really needed in the Middle East is not a hard power policy, what is really needed is soft power strategy that needs to counter all the challenges that I have mentioned; A soft power that includes building, communication, dialogue, capacity-building, training and exercises, planning and support for contingencies, and operational coordination and support. Cooperation will continue to develop in a practical way, towards diffusing the military secular dictatorship as well as the religious dictatorship to achieve liberal model of plurality and free prosperous society where everybody is respected where no one is denied.

I end up saying that Turkey is the most crucial country to solve the crisis, and be the moderator between the European Union and the area. We understand that there is no

homogeneous entity in Europe, but there is need for Europe to reform the way it works and takes a leadership role in MENA region not only an adaptability policy.

Finally let me end by saying “great power needs great responsibility”, and I extend to bring a quote for Martin Luther king “the question is not if we be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. The nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.