

The Turkish-Russian Rapprochement



Situation
estimation





جسور للدراسات
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Summary

The current study emphasizes that the basic reason for the Turkish - Russian rapprochement is the Russian support for turkey to abolish the project of Kurdish entity northern of Syria with the US disregard for the Turkish fears about this project which Threatens its national security , also this study considers the rapprochement as a phased tactical , and there is still no strong indications of Turkish turning towards the east especially with Turkish welcoming the US participation in the talks what is going between turkey and Russia is a period of convergence on a number of interests resulted from the current field situation and the urgent need of turkey to implement its plans in northern Syria , which will not happen without the agreement with Russia , and that led turkey to accept a new plan for the solution in Syria.

We can mention many reasons for the Turkish decision to rapprochement with Russia, the concept of rapprochement has reasons for both parties but the turning in the Turkish stance makes the impression and public orientation predominant is the Turkish stance more than Russian, and also led to talk about the possibility of a change in turkey's strategy to move from the western camp to the eastern, especially after the hint of Turkish president about the turkey's willingness to join SCO1.

It have not happened any transition between the axes or camps yet, and this seems that it still far in accordance with the data and current conditions, despite the improvement in the Turkish -Russian relations after the failed attempt of coup and the Turkish suspicion in the American role and the possibility that Obama's administration has a role in this attempt, and the US disregard of the Turkish demand to deliver the cleric who lives in Pennsylvania, Fethullah Gulen.

In conjunction with the Turkish Russian rapprochement and the US - Turkish divergence, the tension with European Union countries happened, which they did not support the Turkish democracy, merely defending the rights of the perpetrators of the coup, threat turkey if it approved the death penalty, and the European recommendation to freeze the negotiation about Turkish joining to the European Union.

Also the suspicious stance of NATO towards the Turkish fighter jets' dropping of the Russian Sukhoi in November 2015, proved later that

officers follow the group of Gulen dropped it, in addition to economic and commercial reasons after the Russian sanctions on Turkey.

The fundamental cause

In fact , there are several reasons for the Turkish-Russian rapprochement , which is the western stance generally, and the us stance particularly , especially during the rule of Obama, or the possible policy of Trump towards the idea of Kurdish entity northern of Syria , and relying mainly on the Kurdish separatist groups in facing ISIS , which paving the way for more influence for them and facilitate their task in linking the Kurdish cantons from Kubani to Efrin , and this will lead to isolate turkey from Syria and the Arab region , and encourage Kurds of turkey to demand the separation which will threaten the unity of Turkish territory.

Therefore, due to the sense of coming risk, turkey has started the operation Euphrates shield through forces of FSA and the direct support of Turkish forces, which seems that it will continue despite the expected impacts .the operation has started the serious stage in recent weeks, with the news about the numbers of dead and wounded of the Turkish Army².

As it seems clear that the coordination of operation has been with agree of Russia without the will of US which limits the Turkish role in supporting the Syrian opposition.

It was clear in tragedy of Aleppo, where the Turkish role was limited trying to reduce the damage, number of victims, provide humanitarian aid and the political support to the ceasefire and withdraw the armed fighters to Idleb, and perhaps this was the best available solution for turkey, and perhaps the operation Euphrates shield was the base of political operation which led to the triparty agreement between Russia- Turkey and Iran recently.

The rapprochement has been dome due to the Russian understanding which was in an important circumstance of Turkish fear for its national security and during is continuous war against PKK , where Moscow granted the green light for turkey to prevent establishing the Kurdish entity northern of Syria, and closed a representative office for Kurds in Moscow after dropping the Russian aircraft , while Obama's administration disregarded all fears with a country that considered itself as the largest allies for

Washington in the region , and working to enhance the Turkish fears by support these fears and visit the military officials of the Kurdish camps northern of Syria.

Tactical orientation

The progress of Euphrates shield which helped turkey to control more than 2000 square km³ led to the decline of the risk level for the Turkish leadership , which will reduce the level of rapprochement between turkey and Russia , or to slow down the path of its progress on the ground at least, so the orientation of turkey towards Russia is not a strategic orientation , but tactical to impose facts on the ground working to improve the chances and create new ways to maneuver after getting rid of the risk of Kurdish entity.

In the same context , in short term , turkey will accept many points that was refusing talk about, such as issue of Assad's staying which his departure was one of its conditions , then it soon hinted to accept his staying for a transitional period ,then it did not mention that in the last talks, which it believes that Ankara considered it as a tactical point due to the gains of Assad recently , turkey is also aware that the staying of Assad is not sacred for Russia or even Iran.

Moscow's ability to sabotage

One of the important things that perceived by turkey in this context is that Russian led by Putin , still has the ability of sabotage Turkish or even international plans in Syria , and cannot be accomplished the solution without Russian approval , so Turkey in its rapprochement with Russia aimed to success the plans related to frustrate establishing the Kurdish entity northern of Syria, but it also aware that Russia cannot impose its vision and solutions to everyone , without the ability to impose its plans ,so this realization enhances the say that the current arrangement is temporary arrangements.

There is also something tempts Turkey's rapprochement with Russia , which is the vision of Trump of the relation with Russia and the need to cooperate with it , despite the fact that trump's vision does not mean his

satisfaction of rapprochement of turkey with Russia and Iran , especially that the last agreement between turkey and Russia regarding to Aleppo was without cooperation with Washington and at a time of lower degrees of coordination between USA and Russia followed by a diplomatic crisis led to expulsion of Washington for a number of Russian diplomats, but this can be also understood as an exception to the Obama's administration not for America, which is exploited by Russia intelligently to show its leadership internationally in the period between Obama's departure and Trump's arrival ,Turkey also tries to prove that it has the ability to face ISIS, for Trump's administration , and Washington can rely on the its supposed allies which is Ankara , not the Kurdish militias that pose a risk to it.⁴

Determine the role of Iran

Regarding to the Turkish Iranian relations , although the Turkish- Russian -Iranian agreement on Syria ,the relation between Ankara and Tahran is at stages of most tension , where Tahran did not accept the coordination between turkey and Russia together away from it about Syria , where the negotiation currently which taking place in Ankara with the Syrian factions are attended by Russian and Turks officials only what enhance the idea that the tripartite meeting between Turkey, Russia and Iran recently was due to an Iranian idea raised by the Iranian foreign minister , Jawad Zaref after the bilateral meetings with Russia and Iran for ministers of foreign affairs and defense.

As that Turkey believes that Iran and its militias have utmost bad role in the tragedy of Aleppo and displace its people, some Iranian militias attacked the convoys of evacuate people from Aleppo, and they believed that the Turkish Russian agreement of evacuation Aleppo has excluded these militias, and these militias soon demand for evacuation of the people of Fouaa and Kafrya in Idleb countryside in return for achieve the agreement has been done with Russia.

The Turkish foreign minister considered that the regime of Assad and some groups (which did not mention their names) are responsible for the preventing implementation of the ceasefire in Aleppo, calling all parties to do their duties towards civilians in Aleppo saying that (everyone is guilty)⁵

The Turkish minister hinted again the Iranian role during a press conference, when he called Iran to exert its influence positively , specially through putting pressure on Hezbollah , Shiite groups and the Syrian regime) as the TRT reported⁶.

While some may believe that the advantages of the agreement are not large compared to enhance the power of regime , but the consideration of the issue shows that Ankara focused on maximizing the Russian role , and trying to induce Moscow to more pressure on Iran and its militias during the next weeks within an attempt to rebuild the FSA , Turkey also got the legitimacy of intervention in the north from with Russian cover and will work to get the US cover , which Iran will not be able to do during the rule of Trump , and it is expected for Iran to live a new period of suffering and harassment if Trump fulfilled his promises of election campaign.

In another context, the assassination of the Russian Ambassador , Andrei Karlov in Ankara in the eve of the tripartite meetings that was attended by that the Turkish foreign minister in Moscow , did not affect the current rapprochement between the two countries because the needs of the current phase imposed on the two parties to coordinate together , and Russia had believed that it was in the phase before the political victory after the field and military victory in Aleppo , so it was expected to agree with turkey and Iran on comprehensive ceasefire , with the continuous Turkish pressure on Russia to limit the shitte militias in Syria . especially the Lebanese Hezbollah's militias⁷.

Absence of the gulf role

It is noted the absence of the gulf countries during the last developments , especially Saudi Arabia and Qatar on the last diplomatic arrangements regarding to the Syrian file , but it is expected that some countries such as Qatar will join these understandings , where several meeting have been held with the Turkish and Qatari parties , and turkey provides Saudi Arabia and other countries by reports about the developments .

The joining of Saudi Arabia was still waited due to the need to prevent Iran to be in the scene, knowing that Saudi Arabia maybe refrain from this using several pretexts such as the non- participation of us but however, on spite of the Iranian Turkish discontent but that might indicate a beginning of

tension in the Turkish Saudi relation, as well as the statements about the Iranian rejection of Saudi participation in this talks⁸.

Turkey is also trying to reach understandings with Russia before find itself facing the Kurdish militias from one side, and the regime's army from the another after the complete control on the city of Al-Bab, which is a challenge point for turkey that accepted a decisive confrontation with ISIS in Al-Bab , and it is likely that turkey will not open a front with the regime which will be about 40 km far from Al-Bab.

Although the recent tripartite meeting between Russia, Turkey and Iran maybe bring positive points in Syria , but the differences are still exist , particularly regarding to the representation of opposition and the excluded factions from targeting except ISIS that there is an agreement to target it, and these points will prolong the negotiation between parties , which turkey considered it as a chance to rest and rearrange the situation internally and externally , but it is also a Retreat due to the power of Russian and Iran , and the opposition perhaps will have an important role in the next phase.

Footnotes:

1 Erdogan: Turkey may join the SCO instead of the European Union, Middle East newspaper, no.13872 , 20 .11.2016

2 Turkish defense minister: the number of dead of army in Al-Bab raised to 16 soldiers, Turk Press, 22.12.2016 . <http://www.turkpress.co/node/29230>

3 Syrian Observatory for Human Rights

4 press conference for deputy prime minister, Numan KurtulmUSh , Decmber 2016 , 5 evacuation Fouaa and Kafrya, sham network , 14.12.2016

6 Jewish Oglu : Iran should exert its influence on Hezbollah and Assad regime as promised in Moscow , and we are welcoming the participation of US , CNN Arabic , 30.12.2016

<http://arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2016/12/30/turkey-iran-should-influence-hezbollah-regime-syria-ceasefire>

7 The same reference

8 Turkey explains for Qatar its understanding with RUSsia on Syria , Al-Khalej online , 26.12.2016