

The Coming War against Iran: Will Turkey be complicit in another war against another neighbour?

By [Cem Ertür](#)

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Despite the latest positive report of the IAEA on Iran' nuclear programme [1], efforts to launch a war against Iran are gathering pace [2].

Given the unpopularity of such a war, the big powers are keeping very quiet about it whilst using highly sophisticated methods to psychologically prepare their citizens.

At the same time, all we hear about *Turkey in the Western European and North American mainstream media is the accession talks with the European Union, the conflict between the religious AKP government and the country's secular establishment (including the military) and the cross-border operations into Northern Iraq.*

Is there no connection between *Turkey and this new threat of war? How does psychological preparation work in the case of Turkey?*

What pressure are the leading NATO countries putting on the Turkish Government? How is the extra-parliamentary opposition reacting to the prospective next stage of the 'Global War on Terror'?

THE 'TRIPLE ALLIANCE'

In 2006, researcher Michel Chossudovsky commented on an alliance that was described earlier by the Middle East Report as 'probably the greatest strategic move in the Clinton post-Cold War years':

"Already during the Clinton Administration, a triangular military alliance between the US, Israel and Turkey had unfolded. This 'triple alliance' is ... coupled with a strong bilateral military relationship between Tel Aviv and Ankara. Amply documented, Israel and Turkey are partners in the planned US aerial attacks on Iran, which have been in an advanced state of readiness since mid-2005." [3]

The recent state visits by the Israeli President Shimon Peres and the Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak to Turkey were the clearest indication yet of this alliance against Iran.

STATE VISITS BY ISRAELI DEFENCE MINISTER BARAK AND PRESIDENT PERES

On board his plane on the way to Ankara on February 11, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said that he would present Turkey's top leadership with Israeli intelligence reports on Iran's nuclear plans:

"It is important to ... try to convince [Turkey] of the facts." [4]

In the wake of this visit, the Israeli defence officials have given the following statements:

"Turkey was interested in acquiring a missile defense system in the face of Iran's continued race toward nuclear power." [5]

"All of the countries in the region understand that the Iranian threat is not just against Israel. Iran's long-range missiles can reach well beyond Israel." [6]

However, Barak had a different attitude towards Syria:

"Turkey has a natural role in certain mediation and has found a proper way to dialogue with Syria. There is respect for Turkey in both Syria and Lebanon. This respect should be used for blocking the flow of weapons from Iran to Hezbollah through Syria. We respect Syria but we also expect Syria to have respect for Israel's identity as well. You cannot impose peace. ... It takes two willing parties." [7]

This statement should be seen as part of the divide-and-rule strategy of isolating Iran. As the leading NATO allies will not be able to attack Iran and Syria simultaneously, they need to break the strategic alliance between these two countries and go one step at a time.

Barak's statements echoed those by the Israeli President Shimon Peres during his visit to Ankara in November last year.

Writer Kemal Camurcu analyses Peres' speech at the Turkish Parliament to a committee with majority from the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) parliamentarians:

"Peres was applauded by the AKP parliamentarians for saying 'You don't realize and you don't understand, your real enemy is your next-door neighbour Iran!'. The purpose of his visit was to declare to the whole region that 'There are the two trends in the region: Iran as a sponsor of terrorism and pro-peace Turkey'. He declared it and received applause! Given his interviews, his speech in the Turkish Parliament and the news items on 'intelligence-sharing', it is plausible to argue that the sole purpose of Peres' visit was to explain to Ankara the 'Iranian threat'." [8]

These statements were all the more significant considering that they were made at a time when the US, Israel and their European allies were desperate to get support for the Annapolis Conference in the face of widespread opposition to this initiative across the Arab World. However, this went largely unreported in the mainstream Turkish media. The Deputy Head of the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi) Mr Sevket Kazan explains the real agenda behind this conference:

"This war against Iran will be launched by the US and Israel with the support of Turkey. Once the power of these two has proved insufficient, the UK, France and finally NATO forces -including Turkey- will also get involved." [9]

US AND ISRAELI SUPPORT AGAINST THE KURDISH SEPARATIST PKK

At a joint press conference with his visiting Israeli counterpart Ehud Barak, Defence Minister Vecdi Gonul said:

"We thank Israel for its support to Turkey in the defense industry. We thank Mr. Barak for sending equipment and devices that Turkey uses in the south-east and in cross border operations [against the PKK]." [10]

In the run-up to this visit, alternative website Fikritakip made the following remark:

"For some time it has been striking that every evening Show TV has introduced at great length the 'high-tech' arms and defence systems provided by Israel to Turkey in the latter's struggle with the PKK... This shows that the nationalist circles, which are thought to be anti-Israel, are in reality grateful to this country for its support against the PKK." [11]

The Turkish media reporting on the US support against the PKK was along the same lines and proved to be instrumental in dissipating the anti-American feelings across the Turkish population. In fact, until the US support began late last year, they were being accused by the Turkish mainstream media and politicians of not only turning a blind eye to the PKK's use of violence, but also of providing covert support to it.

In a newspaper article, former parliamentarian Mehmet Bekaroglu asks the following question:

"Isn't it strange that the US declares the PKK 'a common enemy of Turkey, the United States and Iraq', while also encouraging, or even arming, training and providing intelligence support to the same PKK under the name of PJAK, against another country in the region, namely Iran?" [12]

Actually, this is not all that strange considering the divide-and-rule strategy of the US, the EU and Israel across the Muslim world based on the exploitation of all the existing hostilities and divisions. Until recently, they were simultaneously supporting the Turkish Armed Forces, the PKK and its sister organisation PJAK as well as the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq. According to the Firat News Agency, the reason behind the US support is:

"An agreement made between the US, Turkey and the Federal Administration of South Kurdistan for the construction in South and North Kurdistan [i.e. Northern Iraq and South-eastern Turkey respectively] of two strategic US military bases targeting Iran." [13]

The base in Turkey is reportedly located in the Yuksekova district at the Iranian border. Needless to say, in the event of a war on Iran, the US and its leading NATO allies will be using all the bases on the Turkish territory at their disposal, including the secrets ones. It is important to bear in mind that the notorious US military base in Incirlik (Southern Turkey), which has played a crucial role in all the Anglo-American invasions in the Middle East in the post-cold war period, contains 90 nuclear warheads.

In retrospect, the rejection of the March 2003 parliamentary motion to allow US troops to use Turkish soil as a staging ground for an invasion of Iraq didn't seem to have much of an impact as the US army clandestinely went ahead with its plans anyway.

THE MISSILE DEFENCE SYSTEM

"Turkey is playing a regional leadership role in the Middle East. Turkey's common borders with Iraq, Iran, and Syria provide an opportunity to advance peace and stability, fight proliferation of nuclear weapons, and defeat terrorists in a region that is now the epicenter of U.S. foreign policy." [14]

(US Under Secretary for Political Affairs Richard Burns, in the wake of his visit to Turkey in September 2007)

The Head of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency General Henry Obering recently said:

"The United States hopes to put a third major antimissile component in Europe along with those under negotiation with Poland and the Czech Republic to counter Iran... The previously unannounced third leg in Europe ... would be placed closer to Iran, which is speeding efforts to build ballistic missiles capable of delivering deadly weapons beyond the Middle East... The powerful, 'forward based' radar system would go in south-eastern Europe, possibly in Turkey, the Caucasus or the Caspian Sea region." [15]

Actually, 'the previously unannounced third leg in Europe' was announced back in March 2007 by the US Ambassador to NATO, Victoria Nuland:

"The defence system against long-range missiles of Iran and other countries ... will cover most of the territories of the NATO members and there will be no need for a second system within NATO. But the threat of Iran's short- and medium-range missiles is still present for countries like Turkey. In order to counter that, as USA and Turkey, we are working bilaterally as well as within the NATO framework." [16]

PRESSURE TO CUT ECONOMIC TIES WITH IRAN

Like Iran's main trading partners in the EU, Turkey has been under heavy and ongoing US pressure to cut its economic ties with Iran:

"Turkey's recent conclusion of a memorandum on energy co-operation with Iran is troubling. Now is not the time for business as usual with Iran. We urge all of our friends and allies, including Turkey, to not reward Iran by investing in its oil and gas sector, while Iran continues to defy the United Nations Security Council by continuing its nuclear research for a weapons capability." [14]

In January this year, Stuart Levey, US Treasury's undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, urged Turkey to be vigilant in its financial dealings with Iran:

"It is essential to share information to discuss risks ... and vigilance that is required in order to make sure that Turkey's financial institutions are not abused by Iranian financial institutions and Iranian state-owned banks." [17]

THE EUROPEAN UNION'S 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP' WITH TURKEY

The former German Foreign Affairs Minister Joschka Fischer made the following statement in October 2006:

"Turkey should be a security pillar for the European community, and the efforts to derail that relationship are impossibly short-sighted." [18]

Researcher Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya argues that:

"[The German] Chancellor Angela Merkel intensified her calls for the inclusion of Turkey within the framework of the E.U. through a 'special relationship,' but not as part of the

actual European bloc. This also foreshadowed what Nicolas Sarkozy would later propose to the Turks.” [18]

Columnist Umur Talu explains what this ‘special relationship’ entails:

“French Prime Minister Sarkozy, who ‘doesn’t want Turkey in the EU’, but clings to the USA and Israel and ‘wants an attack on Iran’ will adopt a ‘carrots and sticks policy’ towards Turkey. In other words, he will use the EU as bait for our territory, airspace and bases.” [19]

In fact, that Turkey became a NATO member in 1952, yet has been denied E.U. membership since the creation of the European Union is quite telling. The US and the leading EU countries have a common policy towards Turkey: They are using the PKK, accession to the EU, resolutions on the 1915 Armenian Genocide as trump cards to bring Turkish public opinion into line with the US and EU foreign policy goals.

The following statement by US Democrat Brad Sherman is rather odd given the joint US-Turkish complicity in the ongoing Afghan and Iraq genocides as well as the prospect of another genocide in Iran:

“For if we hope to stop future genocides we need to admit to those horrific acts of the past.” [20]

After all, the world’s leading powers are quite adept at using past genocides/mass murders as an excuse to carry out their own genocides. [21]

‘TURKISH GLADIO’ STILL AT WORK

Daniele Ganser, the author of ‘NATO’s Secret Armies: Operation GLADIO and Terrorism in Western Europe’ (I) , explains an ongoing pattern across the NATO member countries:

“During the last 50 years the United States have organized bombings in Western Europe, [Greece and Turkey] that they have falsely been attributed to the left and the extreme left with the purpose of discrediting them in the eyes of their voters. This strategy is still present today, inspiring fear of Islam and justifying wars over oil.” [22]

Since the beginning of 2007, bombings, assassinations, murders, foiled plots, ultimatums to the government by the armed forces, constant speculation of an imminent coup, inland and cross-border warfare with the PKK, ‘colour revolutions’ (II) style staged democracy demonstrations, high-profile police operations, new anti-terror legislation have dominated Turkish public opinion.

“The detention in Istanbul [in late January] of alleged members of a shadowy Turkish ultranationalist group has revived charges that elements within the Turkish security apparatus have long tried to destabilize the country through a campaign of bombings and assassinations. These allegedly include false flag operations [III] that have been attributed to Kurdish separatists and violent Islamists [sic] .” [23]

The assassination of the leftist investigative journalist and columnist Ugur Mumcu in 1993 was seen by Turkey’s secular establishment, media and armed forces as an opportunity to galvanize anti-Islamic feelings in general and anti-Iranian feelings in particular. The assassination was blamed on Iran, who allegedly used the (Turkish) Hezbollah as a pawn.

In reality, the (Turkish) Sunni Hezbollah has very little in common with its namesake in Lebanon and it is an established fact that this group was created and used by Turkey's paramilitary establishment against the PKK during the 1990s. In fact, on the 15th anniversary of the assassination last month, Mumcu's solicitor brother Ceyhan Mumcu made the following call to the public:

"Let's be careful from now on and do not claim that Ugur Mumcu was murdered by Iran. Although I've been reiterating this point frequently, unfortunately some people are still giving statements to the contrary to the press. According to my research, US took the decision to murder him in May 1992." [24]

Recently, news items on (Turkish) Hezbollah have once again started appearing in the Turkish media. There are grounds to interpret this as part of a subtle psychological operation to set Turkish public opinion against Iran.

AL QAEDA-MONGERING

In the last two months there has also been an increase in Al Qaeda related news reports:

"The security establishment has received specific intelligence information according to which al-Qaeda cells that have infiltrated Turkey and are planning to carry out terror attacks on Israeli targets and sites affiliated with the United States... Fresh security guidelines have been relayed to Israeli government agencies and businesses operating throughout Turkey in light of the threat." [25]

These were followed by anti-terror operations throughout the country. [26] The threat was echoed by US Attorney General Michael Mukasey in the wake of his visit to Ankara this month:

"We are watching Al Qaeda closely. And we have seen in the recent period that they have increased their activities in Turkey... It appeared as though Al Qaeda may have chosen Turkey as a base." [27]

Back in November 2003, researcher Michel Chossudovsky wrote that the bomb attacks on the British consulate and the HSBC bank headquarters in Istanbul coincided with President George Bush's visit to London, which took place the day following the completion of the annual Turkish-US Joint Defense Group meeting in Williamsburg, US :

"The attacks have created conditions for a more active role of Turkey in the Iraqi war theatre... The Istanbul bombings also serve to uphold the shaky legitimacy of Prime Minister Tony Blair in the face of mounting political opposition to Britain's' participation in the US led war." [28]

It looks like a similar strategy is at work in the face of another threat of war. As in the case of (Turkish) Hezbollah, it doesn't really matter whether Al Qaeda has any connection whatsoever with Iran. This is all conflated Islamophobia and racism stoking the fire for war.

IRANOPHOBIA OF THE TURKISH MEDIA

Titled 'PKK's tank or Iran's atomic bomb?', Kadri Gursel's article gives a perfect example of the anti-Iranian propaganda of the Turkish media:

“Iran provided the PKK with shelter and logistical support in the 1990’s, which was a period when Turkey had a close regional cooperation with the US; it fomented terrorism by using a wing of Hezbollah and openly supported Islamic movements through its diplomatic representatives. Murderers trained by Iran killed our intellectuals. Iran did all that to destabilize Turkey, whom it sees as a natural opponent.

Once Iran conducts its first nuclear test, it will become a super-power on the scale of the range of its missiles. Then it is expected to behave even more recklessly as it will have the ability to back its aggressive foreign policy with a shield of nuclear deterrence.” [29]

It is worth bearing in mind that there has been no war between the two countries since the signing of the Qasr-e-Shirin Peace Treaty in 1639.

In a recent newspaper interview, former Turkish President Suleyman Demirel mentions another typical argument against Iran:

“They keep asking me: What is happening to us? Are we becoming like Iran? Where are we heading towards? Will these individual changes eventually turn us into an Iran? That’s the concern. The nation is anxious and frightened of the prospect of a counter-revolution.” [30]

In her open letter published in the Turkish daily Milliyet, Handan Haktanir, wife of Turkey’s ambassador to Tehran in 1991-94, gives a dire warning to Turkish women:

“against certain regulations adopted in the name of freedom in an extremely innocent manner, but then pave the way for a much more repressive regime. According to my Iranian female friends, starting with the introduction of a compulsory wearing of hijab in schools, it took three years for this insidious and gradual process to be completed and then it was too late.” [31]

The ad-nauseam debate on the wearing of head-scarves in public and the secular nature of the Turkish state seem to have an underlying motive of stoking hostility against Iran. In fact, barring some exceptions, even the religious extra-parliamentary opposition and media are at best ignoring the threat against Iran and at worst raising concern about Iran’s increasing sphere of influence in Iraq/the Middle East and its threat against Turkey’s national interests. Sunni prejudices against the predominantly Shia Iran certainly play a role too. As for the various shades of the left-wing extra-parliamentary opposition and media, exceptions apart, they don’t do much other than paying lip service to Iraq, Palestine and Guantanamo Bay.

So, what is the impact of all these manipulations of Turkish citizens? The whole society is extremely polarised along ethnic, sectarian and class identities, showing excessive intolerance and mistrust to each other, in a state of fear and confusion, largely desensitised to the ongoing wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan (let alone anywhere else) and oblivious to the approaching threat against its two other neighbours, namely Iran and Syria. In short, Operation Gladio’s age-old ‘strategy of tension’ (IV) has proved to be quite effective.

NEXT BIG STEP TOWARDS THE WAR: CHENEY’S VISIT IN MARCH

The Turkish daily Hurriyet reported Dick Cheney’s forthcoming visit with the title ‘Cheney will come for the Mullahs’:

“Iran’s ‘nuclear’ threat is the reason behind the US Vice President Dick Cheney’s plans to visit Turkey ... During his visit in March, Dick Cheney will be giving ‘serious’ messages on Iran... He will say: ‘Iran is a very serious threat. Help us and support us’.” [32]

The Turkish daily Aksam’s columnist Nagehan Alci expresses concern about this visit:

“Cheney’s last visit was in 2002 in the run up to the Iraq war to ask support from Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit for the war. He was on a big tour in the Middle East to test the mood about the war... If this visit materialises, then Cheney will be discussing the support provided by Turkish troops in Afghanistan and the situation in Iraq.

But the main issue will be Iran. Cheney might give the signal that the option of a military intervention in Iran is on the table, but will not be talking openly about these plans. Instead, he will mention the sanctions that they want to pass at the UN Security Council. He will emphasize the need to isolate Iran and warn that Iran’s nuclear power threatens Turkey as well. (He gave a similar warning [against Iraq] in 2002).” [33]

In the run up to the Iraq war, there was overwhelming unity in Turkey against the war, estimated to encompass 90-95 % of Turkish citizens. A war against Iran will probably be very unpopular as well, but this time it appears that the Turkish citizens appear to be too distracted and divided to take the threat seriously until the last minute, while the parliament indulges in a conspiracy of silence. Hence this paper is an attempt to redress the information deficit and highlight especially the psychological operations being directed at Turkey to pave the way for conflict with Iran, so that the Turkish and world public perceive the danger and act in time to avert it. Circulation to all interested and concerned parties is encouraged.

GLOSSARY

(I) Operation Gladio: Originally set up as a network of clandestine cells to be activated behind the lines in the event of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe, Gladio quickly expanded into a tool for political repression and manipulation, directed by NATO and Washington. Using right-wing militias, underworld figures, government provocateurs and secret military units, Gladio not only carried out widespread terrorism, assassinations and electoral subversion in democratic states such as Italy, France and West Germany, but also bolstered fascist tyrannies in Spain and Portugal, abetted the military coup in Greece and aided Turkey’s repression of the Kurds.

(II) colour revolutions: Burma’s “Saffron Revolution,” like the Ukraine “Orange Revolution” or the Georgia “Rose Revolution” and the various colour revolutions instigated in recent years against strategic states surrounding Russia, is a well-orchestrated exercise in Washington-run regime change, down to the details of “hit-and-run” protests with “swarming” mobs of Buddhists in saffron, internet blogs, mobile SMS links between protest groups, well-organized protest cells which disperse and reform.

(III) false flag operations: Covert operations conducted by governments, corporations, or other organizations, which are designed to appear as if they are being carried out by other entities. The name is derived from the military concept of flying false colours; that is, flying the flag of a country other than one’s own. False flag operations are not limited to war and counter-insurgency operations, and have been used in peace-time; for example, during

Italy's strategy of tension.

(IV) *strategy of tension*: A way to control and manipulate public opinion by using fear, propaganda, disinformation, psychological warfare, agents provocateurs, as well as false flag terrorist actions. According to historian Daniele Ganser, "It is a tactic which consists in committing bombings and attributing them to others. By the term 'tension' one refers to emotional tension, to what creates a sentiment of fear. By the term 'strategy' one refers to what feeds the fear of the people towards one particular group".

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