

Prof.Dr. Refet Yinanç

Head of International Relations Department

Gazi University

STRADIGMA: Following Iraq War, what are the obvious and potential distinctive effects of war on the global and regional balances? Especially when we consider Afghanistan and Caucasia, what would be the new shape of geopolitics of Eurasia and Middle East that Turkey is also a part?

R. YINANÇ: We may start a bit backward, if you wish. As you recall, George Bush realized the first intervention to Iraq on January 17, 1991 and the Gulf crisis broke out. Following that Saddam Hussein surrendered and accepted his defeat. Afterwards, USA wanted to take Iraq under its control with the claim of Saddam Hussein's nuclear arms production. Especially in the context of globalization, USA orientated more to Iraq after Afghanistan incident. Actually USA was determined before to realize this operation and a budget allocation was made for Iraq operation during the presidency of Clinton. But Clinton did not favor this operation. When son Bush became President, he re-handled the issue and following September 11 terrorist attacks, intervened to Afghanistan. Following that, in spite of the objections of France and Germany in the United Nations, USA intervened to Iraq. This intervention was discussed in different circles and even the shake of European Union and its disintegration claims were made.

Since Turkey is on the transit road to Iraq, USA, before intervention to Iraq, requested Turkey's permission and the Government opened all airports and seaports. But in the second voting of the approval notice, the parliament declined the proposal. Turkey, the strategic ally of USA since 50 years, "this was first said by Clinton", left her ally alone in the middle of the way. As a matter of fact, this decision belongs to the Parliament. Actually, I myself would prefer Turkey to take side besides USA. As we all aware, the latter developments show Turkey's loss due to this condition. Turkey should act as an element of stability in such a situation.

If we review the present condition, a parliamentary system has been developed in Northern Iraq and the way of establishing a government and a state was brought to agenda. But at that moment, Turkey posed a negative attitude and determined its red lines. Actually all European Union members and certain USA authorities send congratulation messages when the parliament in the North Iraq was announced. But when Turkey expressed its reaction, it was postponed and USA, at first, and the others informed Turkey about the impossibility of such a development. But when we look at today, the red lines disappeared and finally USA made a very humiliating action. The message of the USA Defense Ministry is interpreted in every newspaper in a different way. It is discussed in the public opinion whether it is an apology or an expression of sadness. In the past, in the year of 1964, we faced with a letter of Johnson, during the prime ministry of İnönü, to which he said "A new world order is established and Turkey finds its place in it". And afterwards, Turkey revised its foreign policy and started relations with the Soviet Union. Iskenderun iron and steel factory, Seydişehir aluminum factory, Aliğa refinery are accomplished with Soviets. The last incident was a second warning for Turkey and in this case USA has almost a retaliatory attitude.

Especially from the Middle East countries' point of view, Turkey has a very strategic place in its geography. By taking advantage of this position, Turkey must take its place in the restructuring of the region. Including Poland and even Georgia, so many states want to provide their soldiers, even symbolically, to the region. Italy, which objected the war

in the beginning, now placed herself besides the USA and England. Spain's support led European Union to question its policies. USA, not to experience another Vietnam incident, needed to form a coalition, and countries informed USA to take place in this coalition to give their support. According to recent news, Turkey is planning to send a brigade as support. In my opinion this will help to neutralize USA–Turkey relations, which became tense by following the decline of support proposal in the parliament.

STRADIGMA: By considering the political development, that started in the shadow of the military power demonstrated at Iraq, must be taken in the general plan of reshaping of the Middle East, I want to ask you that would it be possible for the USA to realize the requested changes specifically in countries like Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia, without use of force? May we learn your previsions about the process of interactions and tensions at the region?

R. YİNANÇ: First of all Iran is our neighbor. So is Iraq. But there was a cruel administration at Iraq. If you ask my opinion, USA's intervention is right. Because the people of Iraq were under a serious pressure. I witnessed the pressures and massacres while I was in Iraq. I know the conditions that Iraqi people had lived in. No one could ask anything. As you know, still mass murders and mass graves are being found. That also affected Turkey's attitude. If we again return to your question, our neighborhood with Iran and Iraq, gives Turkey a special voice in the region in spite of the super powers. Syria and Iran has begun to be frequently named after Iraq operation, within the "triangle of evil" as declared by USA consisting of Iran, North Korea and Syria.

When we have a look at Iran, as you know, since 1970 Humeini Revolution, Iran has been administered by an Islamic regime. There is still a strong, a well educated intellectual group in Iran, who closely follow and evaluate the global developments. As we all observe, a slight movement under the leadership of students', has started in Iran after USA's intervention. Though still silent, I think these movements are in a stage of incubation and these are the first signals of bigger movements. The intellectuals would not accept Molla regime in Iran afterwards. But, the change of power in Iran may occur within the king's family at Iran because there is a very large royal family. A political or a social transformation in Iran is not possible by an American intervention.

Another potential danger for Iran, due to its multinational structure, is the existence of Iranian Azeris that are living in the northern Iran, the region that is called South Azerbaijan. So before making any prevision for this country, the results of the elections in Azerbaijan should be waited because, the policies of the new administration towards Iran, will sure affect Iran. Iranian Azeris, who were silent in the past, have been in a new reformation since the shaking of Molla's regime. Iran should leave its hostile attitude and change policies towards Turkey. Iran, which supported PKK, is now facing with the PKK threat. Iran must be friendly to Turkey and even has to be in cooperation with Turkey. If Azerbaijan follows a unification policy with South Azerbaijan like in the times of Elchibey, Iran might cooperate with Russia and Armenia.

When we look at the recent situation in Iraq, we see that American forces having growing losses day by day. And this caused a reaction to President Bush in America. The medium is getting tenser and in next year's elections a second Vietnam syndrome seems as inevitable. Certainly this will not be foreseen by USA. Bush, in his yesterday declaration, said that USA's retrieval from Iraq is no way possible since they changed the regime there. Though never undermining the public opinion pressure, it seems for sure that USA will remain in Iraq. Just at that point of state,

Turkey might serve as a stabilizing force in the region both from the Iran's and Iraq's angles.

USA's intervention to Iran is not easy. As I recalled your attention before, Iran's position very different than Iraq and Syria. An intervention to Syria can be accomplished, but to intervene in Iran is difficult. Though Iran has a multinational ethnical structure, has a very strong tradition of state administration. So, Iran is unpredictable in its actions and could always perform varied maneuvers as in Iran – Iraq War. Actually since that time, USA–Iran relations have never moderated. Without establishing a permanent solution at Iraq and without securing the support of American public opinion, USA's intervention to Iran is not possible. Turkey, also, never wants such an intervention.

Consequently, in the framework of these developments, Turkey and Iran begin to get closer each other. Leaving its unilateral politics, Turkey begins to conduct multilateral politics. And this led to Turkey's approaching to European Union side. Leading countries of European Union; Germany and especially France begin to approach Turkey in a more moderate way. These changes in balances might lead a separation of powers. East and West blocks that balanced each other during Cold War period might be replaced by USA, which declares itself as the emperor of the world against Europe or Far East block leaded by China as new balance of power.

STRADIGMA: What would be the future of the obvious contradictions between USA and Europe, as emphasized presently and also as just pointed by you, in the near future and how it will influence the international system? Could Europe emerge to compete with USA, economically, militarily, culturally and technologically in the coming period?

R. YİLANÇ: Very hard. Would Europe gain the power to compete with USA or surpass USA? Europe did it in EURO. But USA is a big power. USA complies with all the requirements of a super state both technologically and administratively. But, of course, it doesn't mean that USA will always keep this power. Today 2 million unemployed and hungry people leave in America. Some theorists say that USA will also disintegrate but I think USA will preserve this power for a long time. What Turkey must do at this point, is to stabilize. Johnson's letter was a warning for us, which led revisions in the foreign policy. Perhaps the last stage of Turkey–USA relations might be a turning point for the Turkey's foreign policy changes.

STRADIGMA: Would you please explain the steps that Turkey must take, by evaluating the alternatives in the light of the proposal made by TRNC (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) President Rauf Denktaş last week, in order to reach a detailed solution and permanent peace?

R. YİLANÇ: One of the important issues in Turkey's agenda is the step that Turkey must take on Cyprus. This matter is also being in discussion at Cyprus. There are people who support the Annan Plan and also ones who are against it by claiming that it is against Turkey's interests. But it is necessary to reach a solution. Mr. Denktas has partly weakened during these processes. We cannot reach any point with the policy of insisting on the status quo. While Greece is a member of the European Union and Cyprus is a candidate member to the EU, Turkey must be in a position to look for a solution. As a matter of fact, Rauf Denktas's son is not thinking as his father and he is favoring the solution. The opening of borders is a very important step. It is an opportunity for parties to join together again. And other steps will follow it. There are some who are against to this decision by claiming that it is strategically against Turkey to become that much closer with Greece and even Europe But it is not possible for Turkey to be in controversy

with Europe at this point as being a candidate to the EU. So the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots have to become closer. Although ethnical problems have aroused in the countries after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, all countries shall learn to live with the ethnicity. The world public opinion will get used to it. And there is no other solution. So, the two societies of Cyprus will come together. I am favoring the solution and foreseeing that negotiations will continue on the basis of the Annan Plan.

STRADIGMA: Cyprus's membership while Turkey is out of the EU, how shall effect Turkey's membership to the EU and lead what new problems? Would EU be insistent on the solution of Aegean dispute after Cyprus?

R. YİNANÇ: Mümtaz Soysal resembles the Aegean Sea to a river and says two sides of a river. So, two societies living at both sides are very close to each other with their traditions and living styles. When we consider this fact, there will be a solution. There will be problems in the framework of traditional Turkey policies of Greece, but there will be no serious dispute between Turkey and Greece when and if they both have the right-minded governments. Especially now and then Greece is not our only address. There is also EU. So both sides will make mutual sacrifices.

STRADIGMA: Where do you see Turkey's future? In the 21st century plans and in such geography, how Turkey shall locate herself?

R. YİNANÇ: Atatürk showed us the future of Turkey. Turkey's future is besides the contemporary civilizations. Contemporary civilization is the west presently. This is a criteria, a measurement., and a target, So our direction must be towards west and we have to reach that level.

STRADIGMA: Professor Yinanç, we thank you a lot.

R. YİNANÇ: I, also, thank you.

www.stradigma.com

monthly strategy and analysis e-magazine

STRADIGMA.com is a **FORSNET** e-publication