



By: *Emre Alkin*

# The economy is now the Priority of Turkish Diplomacy



At a meeting I attended earlier this week, I had the opportunity to get an insight from highly respected experts about the details of Sweden's NATO accession. The experience was quite mind-opening for me.

Frankly, such interactions seem more important and fundamental to me, compared to daily questions I get about exchange rates, interest rates and stock markets. Now, allow me to offer a brief analysis of Turkey's recent diplomatic moves.

According to these experts, the fact that Hakan Fidan, İbrahim Kalın and Çağatay Kılıç have all suggested that Turkey should re-establish cordial relations with the US and the rest of the Western world had a notable impact on recent developments.

Diplomacy is to achieve the possible, not the ideal, and apparently these experienced politicians have been acting as the voice of reason in terms of ensuring that Turkey takes rational steps.

After all, in their previous roles, they have all set a fine example of how to perform best practices in international diplomacy.

A successful diplomatic process will obviously require patience and intelligent manoeuvres on the part of the government.

So, below I have put together for you the questions I asked to the experts at the meeting and the answers they provided, which will help you fully grasp the nature and the potential of these recent developments.

## What will Putin say about Turkey's recent diplomatic moves?

Since is already in an unfavourable situation, he could only react symbolically. Most likely,

Turkey has already informed Russia about what its next step will be.

However, there is one thing that does not make sense: the return of Azov Commanders to their country from Turkey, who were supposed to remain in Turkey until the end of the war. There must definitely be a valid reason for this decision, which the Russians did not like at all.

My guess is that the Turkish delegation said, "we are not against you, but economically we are obliged to do it" to the Russians about this new strategy.

For now, I could say that Turkish Diplomacy operates purely on economic needs. Meanwhile, Turkey makes continuous efforts to make Russia change its mind about pulling out of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and renew a deal with Ukraine.

Russians, on the other hand, have repeatedly stated that they could not benefit from this agreement.

According to Russian officials, Russia has been having difficulties in terms of payment, insurance and logistics, which was making more difficult for the country to export their grain and fertiliser.

So, apparently, we cannot expect Russia to extend the grain deal unless the West removes export obstacles.

## Does the Wagner Group's mutiny affect Turkey's decisions?

I don't think so. This is a personal matter between

Putin and Prigozhin, concerning the rapid rise of a man, who has, by chance, become Putin's favourite, to a position as the head of a Blackwater-style private military company, and his eventual rebellion when he felt that he was being used.

The Janissaries used to do the same thing during the Ottoman period. They would always ask for more money and the head of any person they didn't like.

There were also times when they would run amok and want the Sultan's head on a spike, but this does not appear to be the situation for Putin for the present.

## Could the Russia-Ukraine War Come to an End Soon?

The Turkish government said, "withdraw and leave the rest to us" to the Russians months ago, but the US and Germany did not want to give Putin the opportunity to pull out with any dignity intact. In my opinion, this war will not end until the US elections are concluded, so as to provide Biden with a sufficient amount of time to achieve diplomatic and political success in this process.

My guess is that the US will execute a plan according to which Turkey and the West will be brought relatively closer, the embargoes will be lifted as a result of this bilateral rapprochement, and of course, the White House will sell old technology aircraft and other weapons such as the F-16 to Turkey.

Eventually, Turkey will be removed from the list of "countries that violated sanctions imposed on Russia".

As we all know, there has not been a formal visit between an American president and a Turkish president for a long time. I expect that the date and the venue of this meeting will likely be announced soon.

## What Happened at NATO's Vilnius Summit?

The good news is that the summit went better than expected for Turkey. Even the leaders of the Gulf Countries called President Erdoğan to ask how it went.

The reason why they called is that Turkey is still on the "grey list" and is still considered suspicious in terms of fund movements.

It is said that Erdogan has requested the EU to make Turkey a member and in exchange, Turkey will ratify Sweden's NATO membership.

This is actually an attempt to persuade the West to have Turkey removed from the grey list. It is only natural for Turkey to try to get itself out of the grey list urgently, especially when the Gulf Countries are looking for new investment options.

## Could the Turkish Parliament Oppose Sweden's NATO Membership?

I don't think so. The opposition has not made any statement objecting to this matter either. MHP, the ruling partner, on the other hand, has been showing an opposing stance. Even a few AKP deputies issued similar statements.

Despite this, I do not think that the President will have difficulty in persuading the majority. Some big media outlets in Turkey have been spreading positive news about Sweden for a few months now.

Apparently, the government has already started to convince the public into accepting Swedish accession to NATO.

Public works on this issue started quite a long time ago. These developments are likely to help Turkey's EU membership prospects closer.

## Is it possible for Turkey to move closer to the EU?

Of course it is. In fact, Sweden has responded with a humorous riposte to this issue:

“Germans and Belgians do things that make you giving them the usual ‘reaction you give to us”.

The Turkish government does not deny this, but it also maintains its stance: “we have nationalist-conservative voters. But we do not make the mistake of taking them for granted. We shall accept neither terrorist organisations such as the PKK and FETO nor disrespect for people’s

religious sentiments. The EU must take the right steps about this issue”.

President Erdogan is set to visit Germany soon, which might be considered a preliminary attempt to explore Europe’s feelings about an EU-Turkey rapprochement.

Sometimes it’s good to know the background of the facts. Otherwise, you might fail to see the big picture when you are exposed to superficial comments and analyses made based on positive or negative