

although intense, is limited and extremely costly. Now, if this reality is situated, within a joint conceptual framework, beside Turkey's drone and missile capability — which possesses both experience in multiple battlefields and leadership in designing and producing unmanned combat platforms — the message to Israel will be that, in the event of a full-scale confrontation with Iran, it is no longer confronted solely by an eastern Shia front, but by an environment in which certain Sunni, NATO-member, and Western-linked states can, even at the level of constraining operational space, alter the equation against it. The third layer is political and narrative. Iran has, for many years, carried the banner of opposition to Israel, yet this opposition, in the dominant Western narrative, is often depicted as an ideological and religious confrontation. Turkey, especially under Erdogan's leadership, is, on the one hand, a NATO member and a serious economic partner of Europe, and, on the other hand, presents itself as a defender of Palestine and an explicit critic of Israel. If Ankara and Tehran arrive at a type of implicit division of labor on the matter of Palestine and the periodic wars in Gaza — one

employing the rhetoric of resistance with severe language, and the other employing a more normalized yet fervent Islamic-national language — Israel will confront a front that elevates its costs both on the battlefield and in media and diplomacy. This narrative overlap, if combined with the aforementioned military and geopolitical layers, elevates deterrence from the level of missiles in storage to the level of multidimensional pressure, although the probability of it remains extremely low. Naturally, such a scenario is both attractive and high-risk for both sides. For Iran, the attraction lies in escaping the trap of the image of Iran as Israel's sole serious adversary, distributing mediation among several capitals, and acquiring a more profound comprehension of the West's defensive and offensive network. However, in contrast, the danger is that, by opening the domain of military and intelligence cooperation to a NATO-member state, a portion of the deep knowledge of Iran's missile and drone capability may be placed at the disposal of an actor that might, in the future, change direction or transmit information to the West.

For Turkey, the attraction lies in becoming a power that can act as the principal negotiator between Israel and Iran, and between the West and the East, and, simultaneously, employ Iran's unparalleled experience in asymmetric and stand-off warfare. However, this path also imposes costs upon Ankara: heightened pressure from the United States and NATO, increased sensitivity from certain Arab countries, and the danger of becoming trapped between two fires if Iran-Israel tension moves toward explosion. Ultimately, the synthesis of these developments indicates that Fidan's trip and Erdogan's future presence in Tehran cannot be summarized within the level of a ceremonial event or an economic roadmap. These comings and goings, in the continuation of the imposed 12-day war, constitute an endeavor by both sides to ensure that the future of wars and peace in the Middle East is not designed without their own presence. Iran endeavors to diversify its deterrence and bloodlines and to exit the monopoly of Saudi and Qatari mediation; Turkey seeks to exit marginalization in the Iran dossier and present itself as one



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaks at the Big Palestine Meeting in Istanbul on October 28, 2023.

of the architects of the new order. Meanwhile, the idea of concealed military cooperation in the domain of missiles and fighter aircraft, and the possibility of designing a joint deterrent blueprint against Israel, although presently at the level of potential and capacity, is pre-

cisely the locus that, if taken seriously, can, several years hence, be recalled as a turning point in the history of the regional balance of power; a point at which Tehran and Ankara advanced from mere rivalry toward a calculated convergence of interests against a shared adversary.

Tehran-Ankara cooperation paradigm during transition of Mideast order



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OPINION

The recent visit of Hakan Fidan, the Turkish foreign minister, to Iran, within the framework of consultation concerning bilateral cooperation and regional dossiers, once again reminds us of the importance of the condition of relations between the two neighbors in the regional structure. The fluid developments of Middle East, the elevated dynamism and the displacement of equations in the post-October 7 period, have placed the process of transformation of the regional order on an accelerated trajectory, so that the principal actors in determining the paradigm of bilateral and multilateral relations maintain a long-term vision toward their strategic plan, in order to consolidate their position in the forthcoming order. Amid this situation, Iran and Turkey are among these cardinal actors whose competition-cooperation paradigm, according to their geopolitical capacities and geography, gains significance under the management of conflicting interests and the reinforcement of commonalities. According to the official announcement, the developments of Syria and the cease-fire of Gaza will be the two regional pivotal subjects that, during Fidan's visit to Tehran, were to be discussed. The consultation of the Turkish foreign minister with Iranian officials occurred during the anniversary of the fall of Damascus. Last year, during such days, Fidan transformed his expansive diplomatic dynamism, especially with Tehran and Moscow, into an advantageous asset in his foreign policy dossier. He claimed in numerous interviews that he had succeeded in persuading Tehran and Moscow, as the most significant supporters of the Assad government, that continued support for him would no longer secure their interests. Fidan even criticized Iran's regional policies, especially in Syria, and believed it was now the time for Iran, by accepting the necessity of altering its approach, to join cooperation for the days of peace and stability in Syria. However, now, with the passage of one year since the fall of Assad and the domination of al-Jolani over Damascus, the condition of Syria possesses little correspondence with the statements of Fidan and the supporters of al-Jolani



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one year ago. The stalemate of negotiations of the Kurdish groups east of the Euphrates, the uncertain condition of the northern strip of Syria under Turkish influence, the massacres on the Mediterranean coast and the repression of the Alawites, the occupation of the Golan region and beyond by the Zionist military and their advancement to the outskirts of Damascus, the numerous Israeli bombardments and the annihilation of Syrian military infrastructure, the reinforcement of separatist currents in Sweida Province by Israel, and likewise the daily tensions in the southern provinces with the presence of Zionists constitute part of the developments with which Syrians have grappled during the past year. In such circumstances, the management of the Syrian condition, with the pressures of the United States and the crimes and tension-inducing actions of Israel, has become difficult for the Turks. Although they endeavored, by attracting investment from the Persian Gulf states, by military and logistical support for Damascus, and also by consultation to diminish the energy crisis and ameliorate American sanctions, to delineate a relatively lucid prospect for the future of Syria, nevertheless, the seat of power in Damascus remains unstable. At any moment, an internal or external factor may transform Ankara's one-year achievement

into a quagmire of foreign policy on its southern borders; especially since, until now, they have not been able to discover an endpoint to Zionist movements in Syria and their complete liberty in action and assault at negotiation tables. Abbas Araghchi, our country's foreign minister, last month, in an interview about concerns and common interests with Turkey, also referenced points of divergence, among which one of the most significant is the Syrian dossier. He states that our perspective has been different, and the Syrian issue is among the principal disagreements between the two states. Araghchi, regarding these post-Assad Syrian developments, believed that it had become evident that our concerns were correct, and now these concerns have become clear for our friends in Turkey as well. The Iranian foreign minister also declared that Israel's occupation of Syrian territories and the danger of Syria's disintegration satisfy none of the regional sides. Apparently, Iran, with the Turkish government and the other governments, was still consulting, and if at any time it becomes necessary that Iran assists the stability and territorial integrity of Syria, it shall accomplish this. It appears that, in the current conditions of the instability of the Syrian situation and the record of the new res-

idents of the Damascus palace, Iran's national interests in the region will not be secured by establishing a bilateral communication channel between Tehran and Damascus. However, this cannot necessarily signify Iran's isolation or passivity regarding Syrian developments. On the other hand, Turkey has confronted the harsh reality of the tension-seeking and threat-producing will of the Israeli regime in the Syria that they desired. During the Assad period — with the presence of the Resistance Axis and the communication bridge of Damascus-Beirut and the establishment of a security belt against the malevolence of the regime — the reinforcement of separatist strategies such as the "David Corridor" and the formation of a Greater Kurdistan had been prevented. These are schemes that will direct the threat of territorial disintegration not only toward Syria but also Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. The pressure from Israel upon Turkey in Syria can constitute the groundwork of an opportunity, if in Tehran an intention and an initiative arise in order to benefit from it, preparing the preliminaries of Iran's effective presence in Syrian developments, even in the absence of official relations with Damascus.

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