

Turkey in the Post-COVID Era: Redimensioning Global Supply Chains, Reconstructing Relation with US

After acquiescing Prime Minister Erdogan's request for a US temporary troops pullback from northern Syria, it was President Trump's turn to ask for favours. Following a June 9 phone call between the US President and Turkish Prime-Minister, the latter commented "...after our conversation tonight, a new era can begin between the United States and Turkey."

Though no additional details were provided, some of the consequences soon emerged. Turkey American Business Council (TAK), part of Turkey's oldest business association, the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey, invited Trump's close associate, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, to participate in an on-line conference on Turkey's New Role in the American Global Supply Chain on June 24. Themed "A Time for Allies to be Allies" the conference analysed Turkey's future role as a reliable supply chain partner of the US, envisaging an expeditious recovery in the post-pandemic era.

A member of the US Foreign Affairs Committee, Senator Graham's intervention may well **pave the way for reigniting US-Turkey economic relations as well as repositioning Turkey's role as the US's gateway to Africa**. In fact, Senator Graham was reportedly approached in March by the lobbying firm Mercury Public Affairs on behalf of TAK, in order to "contemplate how we can reignite the economy post-pandemic", mentioning that "joint ventures in Africa could be an exciting part of this plan". In a similar letter addressed by TAK to Wilbur Ross, US Commerce Secretary, TAK offered to "diversify America's supply chain away from China, a stated goal of the Trump Administration".

One may comment that such a diversification has already begun. In an unprecedented move for the past ten years, Turkey authorised a twice a week air shipment between Istanbul and Tel Aviv, operated by the Israeli carrier El Al. The cargo ferries sanitary supplies made in Turkey for the United States.

Such a move not only anticipates the US-China decoupling narrative, but similarly offers Turkey **much needed leeway in both economic and military terms**. Hardly hit by the pandemic, Turkey's economy could benefit dramatically from redimensioned supply chains that would switch from China-centric manufacture to more diversified outsourcing options.

From a military standpoint, Turkey and Russia became increasingly confrontational both in Libya and Northern Syria. Turkey's electronic warfare capabilities proved superior to the Russian missile systems in Western Libya, where the Turkey-backed Islamist Government of National Accord managed to disperse the Russian-sponsored rebels to finally control the bastion of Siirt. However, shall Turkey face an Egyptian military

intervention in Siirt, as Egyptian President Al-Sisi recently inferred, US support would become would become paramount for the Turkish army.

By reconstructing its relation with the US, Turkey would enjoy double-folded benefits: economically, it could play a more active role in redimensioning the post-pandemic supply chains; economically it could enhance its military role in northern Syria and western Libya.

*Shall such a process occur, the **consequences for Turkey's relations with China and Russia** become, however, more difficult to assess.*

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