

DÉBAT

Thierry DE MONTBRIAL, President and Founder of the World Policy Conference

I would like to take the opportunity of having Ali Babacan with us to take a few questions. I will ask you to be extremely brief. It is questions and it is not long comments. Who would like to ask Mr Babacan a question? Herr Jankowitsch, from Austria. By the way, when we had the WPC in Austria in 2014, President Gül was the guest of honour of the World Policy Conference. We at the WPC have a long history of friendship with Turkey and we want to keep it alive.

Peter JANKOWITSCH, Member of the Directorate of the Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe. Former Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Austria

There is no doubt about that and we have fond memories of President Gül in Vienna. Mr Babacan, amongst the many problems facing the world and not only Turkey, there are minority problems. There are many countries that have bigger and smaller minorities, and in Turkey, we have the Kurdish problem. You should be sure that nobody in Europe has the slightest sympathy for terrorist methods as they are applied by the PKK and similar groups. On the other hand, there will be a need to come to some kind of compromise or some kind of arrangement with a rather large group. This group is not only present in Turkey, but also in Iraq and Iran. Your strategy in that regard would be of great interest to us.

Ali BABACAN, Member of Turkish Parliament; Former Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey

We do not really have a Kurdish problem in Turkey. It is a PKK terrorist problem that we are going through in Turkey. Why? Because the ruling party in Turkey, the AK Party, my party, is the party which gets the highest amount of support from the Kurdish citizens of Turkey. Plus, when we look just across the border to Iraq, Turkey and the KRG now have very good relations. Probably right now, Erbil-Ankara relations are better than Baghdad-Ankara relations nowadays.

I would not call it a Kurdish problem. It is a terrorism problem, and we cannot label the terrorism problem through any ethnicity, ethnic religion or religious sect. PKK is a terrorist organisation, which has been officially recognised by the EU, by the US and by other individual countries and other international organisations. How do we deal with it? We do need a comprehensive approach when we deal with terrorism.

However, the thing was, when we actually had the dialogue process to solve this terror issue, then PKK's Syrian arm, PYD/YPG, became an operational partner of the United States in the fight against Daesh. This gave PKK another form of encouragement or a new source of legitimacy to resort to terror in Turkey. That is very problematic, so when we talk about terror or terrorist organisations, we have to have a categorical approach. We should not use one terrorist organisation against another terrorist organisation. We should not cooperate with terrorist organisations.

We may have dialogue and a comprehensive approach, but do not cooperate with them. Do not take them as partners in any kind of business that you are doing. This is what we went through and PKK increased its terrorist acts within Turkey, especially more than one year ago now, when they took hundreds of civilian lives as well as officials' lives. It is a regional issue now and it does need an international approach.

No country nowadays can deal with any terror organisation alone, because terror organisations are now across borders. It is an intra-national and it is an international problem. We need to see that this also needs international cooperation. No country should feel lonely when it is time to fight against terror organisations. We are feeling kind of lonely in our fight against PKK nowadays. They are the operations partner with the US and they have their activities in many countries in the European Union. They are approached with sympathy and empathy.

I think solidarity is very important here, and we need to have stronger cooperation and collaboration when we talk about terror nowadays. Unless we do this, it will be very difficult. An organisation that you cooperate with today could be your enemy in the following months or years. I also think we have done a lot in making Turkey a country where different people can live together in peace. There is our history when we look at this region overall and when we look at Turkey. Many cities are multicultural cities, multi-ethnic cities and multi-religious cities. It is very important to preserve this aspect of diversity, city by city and country by country. Having values and ideas which are above ethnicity and which are above any religious sect or any ethnicity or anything is something that we need to achieve.

Thierry DE MONTBRIAL, President and Founder of the World Policy Conference

Tomorrow, if I am not mistaken, we are going to have a session on terrorism, but one of the big problems is that there is no universally agreed definition of terrorism. Even in the UN system, they have never agreed on a definition of terrorism. We know a number of people once considered to be terrorists who received the Nobel Prize for Peace, so it is quite a complex situation. I will give the floor to Mr Laichoubi for a short intervention.

Mohamed LAICHOUBI, Former Minister of Labor and Social protection and Minister of Youths and Sports, Algeria

L'Algérie a une présence très forte et continue dans les institutions africaines et elle a souvent fait le choix de la résolution des conflits et des crises par l'approche politique, que ce soit en Somalie, en Erythrée, en Libye et ailleurs. Je voudrais avoir votre avis à ce titre : comment voyez-vous le dossier libyen ? Quelle est votre approche ? Et également quelle est votre approche de l'Afrique du nord d'une manière générale et de l'Afrique ? Je vous remercie.

Ali BABACAN, Member of Turkish Parliament; Former Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey

What I said regarding the Middle East in terms of co-existing and in terms of having multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies is completely valid for North Africa as well. You mentioned Libya and we have relatively more successful examples and also worse examples. Starting from Egypt, unfortunately, there was a military coup, and an elected president is now in jail, and there is a different kind of administration right now in Egypt. When we look at Tunisia, there is a more successful example of good transformation. There are still issues, but it is still a better example.

In the case of Libya, it is very unfortunate, because of the much divided nature of society and also the much divided nature of politics. There are various powers acting against each other. However, I think that, within the international community, the UN has played a very constructive role in Libya. The Libyan Political Agreement, which many countries in the international community have agreed on, has to function more and more. We have to side with the legitimate ones.

The international community has agreed on the new councils and administrative structures. This needs to be better backed by the international community. Unfortunately, Daesh is still a player in Libya, and hopefully we will see a phasing out of Daesh. However, when we look at the roots of many terror organisations like Daesh, we also see alienation, exclusion and oppression. No group, no sect and no ethnicity should have any kind of dominance over the others.

Our target should be good governance in countries in order to truly reflect the composition of the society. The will and aspirations of the people will be reflected in how the countries will be governed. External support is very important, because sometimes the domestic dynamics of a country alone cannot bring a successful solution. It is a real duty for the European Union and countries like the US and others, to consult more and also have more of a unified approach.

If every country looks from its national perspective and national interest perspective at Libya and other countries in North Africa, I do not think there will be a healthy solution any time soon. It is a major duty for the European Union and the US to step away from national interests for a while. They must come together to decide what is best for Libya and other countries and what is best for the people of Libya.

At the end of the day, when there is a lack of stability and security issues, it hits the neighbourhoods - sometimes in the form of refugees, as we are observing in Syria or North African countries. Many refugees are trying to reach Europe and are causing huge social and economic issues. Or in the form of terrorism. The most immediate spill-over effects of difficulties in those countries are refugees and terrorism. No country is immune, so we do need a lot of communication, cooperation and collaboration when it comes to solutions.

Solutions, in the end, need to be political solutions. Military solutions alone, if they are just from a military perspective, are not long-lasting. They are not sustainable solutions most of the time. For Libya and for other countries, we must have good political targets and have the international community work together very closely. This happens with supra-national ideals rather than narrow national interests. That is going to be important.

Dorothee SCHMID, Head of the Contemporary Turkey Programme at Ifri

My name is Dorothee Schmid and I am dealing with Turkey at Ifri. My question is: how do you assess the economic cost of the coup? How has it affected the stability of the Turkish state, especially regarding some areas such as the judiciary, which I am particularly interested in? Do you think there is a chance that the death penalty would be voted back into Turkish law, and for what purpose?

Ali BABACAN, Member of Turkish Parliament; Former Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey

Unfortunately, the Gülenists, the followers of Gülen, infiltrated many state units, and the judiciary, especially in terms of judges and prosecutors, were some of their most important targets. We are estimating that about 30-40% of the judges and prosecutors were under the direct influence of the organisation. Now we are trying to solve the problem again through our own judicial system. Many judges and prosecutors were laid off. This is because of the fact that when it is time to decide, we are not sure if they are going to decide through the constitution, through the law and through their conscience. Or are they going to decide according to the orders that they get from Pennsylvania? We cannot be sure.

In order to make sure that the judges and prosecutors really do the job that they are supposed to do, we have to be sure that they are able to act independently. They must be able to act without any influence from here and there. They should also feel empowered to do the right things. We are talking about a judicial system, which is 30-40% under the influence. We are stripping these people out of the system and dealing with the problem with the rest of the judges and prosecutors. This is not an easy process.

We have been hiring many new judges and prosecutors, young lawyers who are now being trained and put into the system. However, this is going to take time, and it is not going to be flawless. However, it is a big effort, and there is a massive effort right now to go back to normal with our judicial system and go back to normal with our security units. Death penalty is now on the agenda of the country, but no proposal has come to the parliament yet, and we do not know what kind of proposal there will be. We do not know if there will be or not. Regarding the timing, those are all unknown, but it is now in the public domain and it is now on the agenda.

However, there is nothing concrete about how it will progress from now on. We will see, but it will be a democratic procedure that we will follow. We know how it is, and how important a subject it is, not only for our European Union friends. It has also been important for our own country and our own citizens. However, you have to remember that we



went through a big trauma, a coup attempt. This was just four months ago, not decades ago. It is very fresh and the influence of this on our public is still huge. We have to see how things will evolve.

Thierry DE MONTBRIAL, President and Founder of the World Policy Conference

Unfortunately, we have to stop here. I want to thank you again and I want to thank Mr Davutoglu for his intervention earlier. Turkey is a very important country in the international system overall, particularly on the European continent and in the Middle East. I am very sure that next year, at the next WPC, we could perhaps spend more time talking with our Turkish friends. I hope that the global situation will have improved by then.