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Towards a Turkey-United Arab Emirates détente: seeking for allies in a volatile scenario.

On October 16, United Arab Emirates' Foreign Affairs Minister, Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, met with Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Ankara: it was the first visit made by an Emirati official in Turkey after years of disagreements.

Turkish-Emirati relations worsened in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings. With the purpose to compete for influence in the new Middle Eastern order, Turkey and Qatar supported groups directly affiliated or inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood, while Saudi Arabia and the UAE sustained Salafi-style movements. In 2013, the so-called intra-Sunni rivalry reached its apex in Egypt: such a geopolitical mood strained the relationship between Turkey and the UAE.

The regional system has now definitely changed, as domestic priorities: therefore, inter-state relations develop too. After the failed coup, Turkey has started to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel and Russia in order to restore a diversified set of alliances. Notwithstanding differences of perception within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the UAE don't want to divide Gulf monarchies' unity now, because of rising regional challenges: since Saudi Arabia opted for a closer alliance with Turkey (able to compensate frictions with Egypt in the framework of indirect confrontation with Iran), the UAE have aligned with their main partner to restore fair relations with Ankara.

Alongside political ties, the whole GCC region, which encompasses the UAE, represents a remarkable partner for Turkey in trade, banking sector, constructions and tourism, as well as an export market for Turkish defense industry.

Even before UAE Foreign Minister's visit to Erdoğan, a sequence of signs had shown that Turkish-Emirati relations were improving: Ankara verbally supported Gulf monarchies' military intervention in Yemen and Abu Dhabi, together with all GCC members, decided to classify Hizmet, Fetullah Gülen's movement, as a terrorist organization.

Moreover, the UAE can play a bridge role between Turkey and Egypt, given their tight relationship with the Egyptian presidency; Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi just met in Cairo on November 10.

Looking at Turkey's recent geopolitical choices, a Turkish-Egyptian rapprochement can't be completely excluded in the medium-term. Adopting realistic lenses, Cairo has been seeking for diversified financial allies, while Ankara could be tempted to revive trade and investments with Egypt, which have been hampered by this rift (with an eye also to the export perspectives of the Egyptian Zohr offshore natural gas basin). In 2013, Egypt unilaterally cancelled the Free Trade Agreement and the Transit Agreement allowing Turkish goods to rapidly reach Arab Gulf markets and the African ones. Just to quote one case, the Abu Dhabi National Energy Company withdrew \$12 billion for a planned thermal power plant investment in southern Turkey, due to their rivalry on political Islam.

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