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## **TURKEY'S STRATEGIC FUTURE**

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**WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY**

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**SUMMING UP BY**

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# TURKEY'S STRATEGIC FUTURE

## WORKING PAPER NO. 13 OF THE EUROPEAN SECURITY FORUM

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## CHAIRMAN'S SUMMING UP

### FRANÇOIS HEISBOURG\*

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The European Security Forum's meeting about Turkey's strategic future took place shortly after the end of combat operations in Iraq, against the backdrop of redefined US-Turkish relations. To set the stage, we had four papers: "Anchoring Turkey in Europe", by Nathalie Tocci (Research Fellow at CEPS); "A US View", by Henri J. Barkey (Head of the Dept. of International Relations, Lehigh University); "A Russian View" by Natalia Oultchenkov (Head of the Turkey Desk, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences); and, "Post-11 September Impact: The Strategic Importance of Turkey Revisited", by Hüseyin Bağcı and Saban Kardas (both are Professors at the Middle East Technical University, Ankara).

In her oral presentation, Ms. Tocci recalled that it was 'old Europe' that had been the most sceptical towards Turkey's membership in the EU. Conversely, the Turkish Parliament's vote on 1 March 2003 (rejecting the agreement to provide transit rights to US ground forces through Turkey to Iraq) was widely seen in 'old Europe' as a decision whereby Turkey asserted its democratic credentials. In this new context, Turkey's continued support for internal reform and resolution of the Cyprus issue could be central to its accession prospects to the EU (facilitated by the fact that the US is no longer pressing Turkey's case). Furthermore, the EU could probably pick up in economic terms where US support is now diminishing.

When presenting his paper, Professor Barkey underscored that the events of March 2003 had exploded the myth of Turkey's strategic importance to the US, although America would continue to value strategic stability in Turkey, given the US fear of radical change there. He underlined the deep impact of the March events on the military-to-military relationship between the two countries, which could reduce the military component in overall US-Turkey relations and, as a consequence, weaken the military role of Turkey itself. Like Ms. Tocci, he underlined the importance of Cyprus in shaping the dynamic of Turkey's future relationship with the EU.

Ms Oultchenko, for her part, reminded the participants that Turkey's European orientation is not a predetermined result of its foreign policy. Further, she pointed out that democratisation could have the consequence of eliminating the traditional processes that Turkey has used to prevent radical Islam from moving into policy. As a result, there is a real possibility of "turning an old and well-known ally into a new antagonist". She noted, however, that the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) had been pragmatic rather than populist in its handling of the US troop transit issue, as it had genuinely tried to get the agreement to support US troops adopted by parliament.

Professor Bağcı, for his part, drew three lessons from the Iraqi crisis:

- Turkey is a functioning democracy;
- the client-patron relationship between Turkey and the US has disappeared; and,
- the military no longer controls politics.

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Turkey is moving towards Europe and the US will have to accept it. A new optimism has emerged in Turkey about joining the EU, fuelled by Commissioner for EU Enlargement Günter Verheugen's recent remarks about dates for accession (2011-2012). Turkey's strategic importance should continue to be considerable, particularly as issues relating to Syria and Iran come to a head.

In the initial round of discussions, several points were made:

- Turkey's chances of joining the EU have been substantially enhanced, as indicated by one European participant: we now have proof that Turkey is a living democracy. This drew a response from an American participant that the decision taken by parliament on 1 March 2003 was not democratic simply by virtue of having been directed against the US – but because it allowed for Turkey's disengagement from the military: "The real losers are not Turkey or the US, but the Turkish military." On this issue, a Turkish participant noted that the army's distancing from the US had begun before the crisis in Iraq, with their refusal to seek US funding for Turkey's involvement in the Kabul International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The same participant noted that continued army resistance to reform in Turkey had been largely driven by the suspicion that the EU isn't really going to let Turkey in, ever. Hence, statements such as those made recently by Mr Verheugen as well as those made by the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, were most helpful.
- The ability of the EU to replace anything as large as the US economic contribution (the 'strategic rent') to Turkey was seriously questioned. Historically, EU transfers to an accession state did not readily exceed 1% of GDP. Nevertheless the same European participant also suggested that it is healthier for Turkey not to receive the sort of massive windfall proposed in the rejected US/Turkish agreement, which distorts macroeconomic policy. Turkey would be better off exercising a virtuous fiscal policy. At this point, a Turkish participant added that assets are not the issue – \$60 billion of Turkey's assets are based abroad; Turkey needs good government more than new money. Nevertheless, another participant mentioned Turkey's massive foreign debt, just in case anyone got carried away with an overly optimistic a view of its economic prospects.
- Subsequent to Professor Bagci's expression of scepticism as to the desirability of Turkey serving as a role model for others, another Turkish participant agreed that this was probably appropriate *vis-à-vis* the Arab world. Things could be different, however, in Central Asia and even more so in the case of Europe, where as a member of the EU, Turkey would have great integrative virtues, leading to a more diverse, 'non-Christian' EU.
- The Cyprus issue drew some debate, with a Turkish participant suggesting that this should be seen as a process and not as a window of opportunity that would slam shut in May 2004. This idea drew the European retort that the EU would lose all leverage *vis-à-vis* Cyprus once it was a full member in late 2004; therefore, Northern Cyprus would do well to work hard on the UN Annan plan.
- US policy in Turkey drew questions and discussion. Whereas Turkey used to know what the US policy was during the years of former President Bill Clinton (the 'bear hug' policy of working with Turkey on all aspects plus constant pressure on the EU for Turkey's membership), this is less clear today, all the more so since some of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) 'neo-cons' don't really want Turkey in the EU. This drew the remark that the administration under President George W. Bush is divided into two camps, but not along the lines of the 'neo-cons' versus 'the others': Deputy Secretary of

Defence Paul Wolfowitz tends to believe in democracy in Turkey and in Turkey's membership in the EU, whereas this view has little traction in the White House (and even less with Richard Perle, Chairman of the Defence Policy Board).

In the final round of discussions, one participant suggested that the general flow of the meeting had been too optimistic, given that relations over Northern Cyprus remain tricky and tensions in Northern Iraq could become ugly, not to mention the risks for Turkey attendant to a crisis involving weapons of mass destruction in Iran! Another participant wondered about Turkey's role in a 'brave new Middle East order' subsequent to the Iraq war and what would be the implications of a 'clean-up' in the Caucasus, where a 'post-Aliev' Azerbaijan goes to war to liberate Nagorno-Karabakh?

On the subject of post-war Northern Iraq, the panellists tended to concur that the risks were still there: provocations can occur and Turkey continues to see 'autonomy' as a bad word, given the Ottoman-era experience of autonomy as a first step to independence. But none discounted the possibility of evolution, nor the idea that 'surprises can happen'.

Regarding Azerbaijan, no objection was raised when one of the panellists indicated that the Azeris wouldn't start a new war. As far as Iran is considered, problems could no doubt arise for Turkey, but for the moment, Iran is not hostile towards Turkey joining the EU.

Northern Cyprus truly remains a problem: all has not been well since the army and the 'deep state' used their veto to block the UN Annan plan. Further, the 'deep state' views the government of Prime Minister Recep Erdogan as an abomination. Notwithstanding these sobering notes, the overall feel of the meeting was neatly captured by one of the individuals who contributed a paper: "Anything can happen, but so far, so good!"

# TURKEY'S STRATEGIC FUTURE

## ANCHORING TURKEY TO EUROPE: THE FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES AHEAD

NATHALIE TOCCI\*

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Since the foundation of the Kemalist Republic, Turkey has sought to associate itself with the West, i.e. with both Europe and the US. Although the end of the cold war strengthened Turkey's ties with the Caucasus and Central Asia, the dominant position in Ankara never advocated a turnaround in Turkey's foreign policy orientation. On the contrary, Turkey presented its strategic importance to the West precisely in view of its bridging role to the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Turkey's European orientation remained a cornerstone of its foreign policy. Since 1987, this has taken the form of aspiring to become a full member of the EC/EU. After December 1999, its prospects of full membership were accepted by the European Council, although these remain in the distant and uncertain future. Scratching beneath the surface, however, there is not yet a consensus either in Turkey or in the EU concerning the desirability of a fully European Turkey and the necessary transformation that this would entail. As such, while Turkey's European orientation is likely to persist, its depth and the ensuing levels of integration in the EU remain unclear. Developments in Turkey, in Europe and the wider international system will determine the evolution of EU-Turkey relations. At this particular juncture, developments in Cyprus and Iraq are critically affecting the relationship.

As noted by several Turkish analysts, 'there are many Ankaras'. The multifaceted nature of the Turkish foreign policy establishment became particularly evident in the aftermath of the December 1999 Helsinki European Council. Turkey's candidacy meant that it was no longer sufficient to pay lip service to the goal of membership. If Ankara was serious in its aspirations to join the European Union, it had to demonstrate that it was equally committed to the Copenhagen criteria. As European demands for reform rose, the concerns and resistance against change in Ankara emerged more clearly.

Effective opposition to EU membership, or rather to the reform necessary to attain it, existed in most groups within the Turkish political system. Those resisting change included circles in the nationalist right and in the nationalist left, as well as in both the civilian and the military establishments. Some right wing nationalists preferred to establish closer links to Turkic Eurasia than to see Turkey's full integration with Western Europe. Traditional Kemalists objected to the erosion of sovereignty within the EU. Others opposed the comprehensive internal reforms demanded by Brussels and were more inclined to pursue Turkey's Western orientation through closer ties with the US.

Often spurred by the US, conservative elements within the Turkish establishment argued that Turkey should be admitted to the Union on laxer conditions, given its strategic importance. For example, the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) leader Devlet Bahçeli argued that 'we need to have a just and honourable relationship with the EU. We strongly oppose the notions that we should fulfil every demand of the EU to become a member or that we have to enter the EU

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at any cost'.<sup>1</sup> Turkish national pride was used as a major weapon, as Turkish eurosceptics accused pro-Europeans of displaying a "lack of confidence in the nation, the Republic, the institutions...Everything called Turkish".<sup>2</sup> Turkey's alternatives to Europe were also cited. On 6 March 2002, General Tuncer Kilinç, National Security Council (MGK) Secretary General, stated that given EU demands, Turkey should start looking for alternative allies such as Russia and Iran.

The landslide victory of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) at the 3 November elections tilted the balance within the party political system in favour of the pro-European reformists. In AKP's rhetoric, commitment to EU membership, as well as its reform path necessary to attain it, is crucial. The AKP refuses to define itself as a religious party but rather calls for greater religious freedoms. In order to carry a consistent political message, it advocates personal freedoms in other spheres as well, including cultural and linguistic freedoms. Its support for EU membership is not only viewed as an end to be attained through painful reforms. In the AKP's rhetoric, the EU anchor is portrayed also a means to attain the objectives of reform, which are as important as membership itself. But while the balance within the party political spectrum tilted in favour of the reformists (the only opposition party, Deniz Baykal's Republican Peoples' Party (CHP) also declares itself in strong support of reforms and EU membership), this is not necessarily the case within the wider establishment, which includes the civilian administration, the Presidency, the intelligence community and the influential military.

Pro-European reformers in Turkey have been weakened internally by the lack of credibility of EU policies towards Turkey. EU actors, particularly those who are of a conservative/Christian-Democratic leaning, have frequently indicated their reluctance to accept Turkey as a full member, irrespective of its compliance with the Copenhagen criteria. Religion, geography, demography, economic development as well as the legitimate concerns over democracy and human rights have been cited as the impeding factors to Turkey's EU membership. One of the most recent expressions of European exclusionism were the comments by Convention Chairman Valéry Giscard d'Estaing just prior to the 2002 Copenhagen European Council, when he stated that Turkey had a "different culture, a different approach, a different way of life...Its capital is not in Europe, 95% of its population lives outside Europe, it is not a European country...In my opinion it would be the end of the EU."<sup>3</sup>

In several instances in the recent history of EU-Turkey relations, 'anti-Turks' in Europe and 'anti-Europeans' in Turkey reinforced each other in a vicious circle of antagonism and lack of reform in Turkey, together with European distancing from Turkey. On the one hand, the more sceptical the member states were about Turkey's future in Europe (and thus the less forthcoming were EU policies towards Turkey), the more credible the Turkish nationalists and conservatives appeared (who claimed that Turkey would never be admitted to the EU and thus it should be cautious in pursuing domestic reforms and foreign policy changes). In other words, as Turkey's mistrust of Europe grew, its own process of Europeanisation slowed. On the other hand, as and when hardliners in Ankara gained prominence in the determination of domestic and foreign policy, EU actors became less forthcoming in their decisions concerning Turkey.

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<sup>1</sup> Devlet Bahçeli is quoted in "Bahçeli Toughens on EU and Its Domestic Supporters", *Turkish Daily News*, 3 April 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Aktan, Gunduz (2002), "New Consensus", *Turkish Daily News*, 3 April.

<sup>3</sup> "Giscard Remarks Cause Uproar in Ankara, Brussels", *Turkish Daily News*, 11 November 2002.

Until December 2002, an important example of Turkish mistrust of European countries was the dispute over Turkey's participation in European security and defence policy (ESDP). Turkey's veto threat over ESDP's use of NATO assets and capabilities was not simply driven by what the civilian-military establishment deemed as broken European promises. These simply served to create the legal context through which Turkey articulated its claims. What lay behind these claims was Turkey's fundamental mistrust of the EU and its strong preference for NATO, in which it is a full member. Turkey did not trust an independent European involvement in crisis areas, many of which are likely to be around Turkey. Turkey feared a European defence involvement in Cyprus in particular. Indeed, the final decision taken in December 2002 in Copenhagen excluded Cyprus (and Malta) from locations of possible ESDP operations, as these countries were not participating in NATO's Partnership for Peace.

On other occasions the vicious circle was broken, opening the way to virtuous interactions. The event of 3 August 2002, in which the Turkish parliament (despite acute domestic political turmoil) succeeded in passing fundamental constitutional reforms, added credibility to Turkey's requests for a date to launch accession negotiations. Without the reforms, the European Council's decisions in Copenhagen in December 2002 would have been far less forthcoming.

In recent months, EU-Turkey relations have been critically affected by both the Iraq crisis and the Cyprus impasse. In March 2003, the Turkish parliament rejected the government's proposed motion to allow 62,000 American troops to be deployed in Turkey for a second front attack against Iraq. After weeks of uncertainty, the American troops were re-routed to Kuwait. The rejection led to a temporary setback in US-Turkey relations, as well as new tensions on the EU-Turkey agenda. Many criticised the government for its inexperience in handling the situation. The government's indecisiveness and its failure to invest sufficient effort to ensure an approval of the motion could have caused severe political and economic losses.

By rejecting the motion, Turkey lost the \$6 billion war compensation grant and the \$24 billion package of cheap long-term loans offered by the US, negotiated by Turkish policy-makers who had recalled the considerable economic costs of the 1991 Gulf War. The incident plunged US-Turkey relations to their lowest ebb since the 1974 arms embargo on Turkey. In the aftermath of the rejection of the motion, tensions rose as the US administration strongly warned the Turkish establishment not to intervene in Northern Iraq independently of American command. EU member states also cautioned Turkey not to intervene in Northern Iraq. Several analysts warned that the setback of US-Turkey relations within a wider context of an expanding transatlantic rift could harm Turkey's EU bid, by the reduction of American support for Turkey's accession process.

Ensuing events, however, gave rise to greater optimism. In the context of the Iraq crisis, the Turkish government strengthened its relations with the Arab world and Iran, without straining its relations with Israel or hinting at a reversal in its western orientation. Indeed, the AKP government had mishandled the passing of the motion. But the new and inexperienced government did so under extremely complex circumstances, owing to the widespread public opposition to the war, the ambivalence of the military and the uncertainty concerning whether a second UNSC resolution mandating war would have been passed. Since the start of the war, Turkey has to date refrained from sending additional troops to Northern Iraq, which could trigger clashes with Iraqi Kurdish forces. Turkey's conduct from the beginning of the war has allowed an improvement in its relations with the US. More importantly it added a positive impetus to EU-Turkey relations, as evidenced by the recent visit of French Foreign Minister



Dominique de Villepin to Ankara. Despite mistakes, the independent and democratic decision taken by the Turkish government concerning the war, while at the same time showing restraint in Northern Iraq, sent positive signals to Western European countries, especially those that have been historically sceptical of Turkey's EU membership and were also opposed to the war in Iraq.

Yet perhaps an even more fundamental challenge in EU-Turkey relations concerns Cyprus, particularly in view of the forthcoming accession of the island. Due to the obstacles posed in Turkey's European path by the accession of a divided island, there has been an essential overlap between hardliners on the Cyprus conflict and the most nationalist and eurosceptic forces in Turkey. To the most conservative forces within the Turkish establishment, the EU accession process is viewed as a threat to Turkey's policy on Cyprus. Furthermore, an intransigent position on Cyprus added another obstacle in Turkey's EU path and thus dampened the momentum in favour of what some viewed as threatening domestic reforms.

At the same time, the lack of a credible EU policy towards Turkey strengthened the arguments of nationalist and eurosceptic forces in Ankara and Lefkoşa, which argued against an early settlement within the EU. Moderates and reformists in Turkey accepted that because of Turkey's own shortcomings, EU membership would occur for Cyprus prior to Turkey. Nevertheless they could not accept that owing to allegedly unchangeable features of the Turkish state and society, Cyprus should mark the borders of the united Europe, keeping Cyprus and Turkey on opposite sides of the European divide. As long as Turkey's fundamental scepticism of European intentions persisted, a settlement in Cyprus would be viewed by Ankara as 'losing Cyprus' rather than sealing a win-win agreement.

In anticipation of the Copenhagen Council meeting, the new AKP government displayed a fundamental shift from earlier administrations concerning Cyprus. It declared openly that it did not regard a continuation of the status quo as a solution, and it appeared willing to recognise the link between EU-Turkey relations and a Cyprus settlement. On the eve of the Copenhagen meeting, the government effectively argued that if the European Council gave Turkey an early and firm date to begin accession negotiations, the government would support a Cyprus settlement on the basis of the comprehensive UN Annan Plan.

Judging by events, the Copenhagen offer was insufficient to induce Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots to sign an agreement on 13 December 2002 or thereafter. This ultimate failure was caused not only by the miscalculated Turkish bargaining tactics, but was fundamentally linked to Turkey's mistrust of Europe. Whether a deal would have been reached if Turkey had received an earlier and firmer 'date' or if the EU-15 had formulated a more resolute and coherent policy towards Turkey before the European Council will remain unknown. But what was clear was that the Turkish government considered these conditions as the minimum assurance to hedge against a prevailing mistrust of the EU. Pressure alone would be insufficient to clinch an agreement.

After the Copenhagen Council meeting, trends continued to oscillate as the by-products of an ongoing battle between elements pushing for or against a settlement. Different positions and logics were continuously aired. Those sceptical of Turkey's future in Europe persisted in their effective opposition to Cyprus's EU membership, and consequently their opposition to the UN Annan Plan. Those in favour of Turkey's EU membership, but unsatisfied with the Copenhagen decision, proposed a postponement of a settlement until Turkey's EU prospects became more clear. Other pro-Europeans pushed instead for an early settlement based on the UN Annan Plan, as they appreciated the difficulty of reaching an agreement following Cyprus's EU membership and understood that in future the international burden would be

placed predominantly on Turkey's shoulders. The most evident manifestation of this flux of ideas was the effective rift between the AKP government and the Turkish Cypriot leadership.

With the failure of The Hague negotiations, for which the Turkish Cypriots were primarily blamed, the conservatives in Turkey and Northern Cyprus appeared to win the day. Although The Hague meeting temporarily sealed the fate of the UN Annan Plan, it did not entail the end of the debate in Turkey. The Cyprus challenge remains on the table and will have to be tackled if Turkey is to progress along its path to the European Union. There are strong reasons for Turkey to pursue a settlement prior to the effective accession of Cyprus in May 2004. The scope to do so exists, as evidenced by the recent opening of the border point and the huge flux of people crossing the frontier. Politically, the opportunity for change could emerge with the December 2003 parliamentary elections in Northern Cyprus. The extent to which this opportunity will be seized will depend on the extent to which, by the end of the year, the Turkish establishment will have reached a consensus concerning an early settlement on the island – a consensus that had not yet been reached in March 2003.

The 'battle' to reach this consensus reaches far deeper than Cyprus and deals with the very nature of the Turkish nation-state and its strategic future. In the coming months and years, decisions taken in both Brussels and Ankara are set to determine the extent to which Turkey's historic European orientation will translate into slow but steady progress towards full EU membership.

# TURKEY'S STRATEGIC FUTURE

## A US PERSPECTIVE

HENRI J. BARKEY\*

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This paper looks at the change effected by the Iraq War upon Washington's perceptions of Turkey's strategic future. The first section analyses the pre-war stake held by Washington in Ankara. The failure to open up a second front in the north against Saddam's regime has surprised, if not shocked, US decision-makers. As a result, US-Turkish relations are likely to experience a period of change and re-evaluation. This paper will show that this is more likely to occur through the change in the Iraqi regime than through a parliamentary vote. In recent years, Turkey was a pivotal state in Washington's containment strategy of Iraq. The US air operations over Northern Iraq that protected the Kurds and constrained the Baghdad regime also created an uncomfortable dependence on Ankara. The change will enable the US to approach Turkey with a more realistic, and in the long term, tension-free manner.

### **A pre-war view: Washington's stake in Turkey<sup>1</sup>**

US interests and objectives in Turkey have steadily expanded since the end of the cold war. The cold war's straightjacket has given way to many new considerations. The primary US foreign policy vision after the cold war was one based on preventing regional disputes from threatening its own and its allies' interests and on expanding market reforms, democratic principles and practices. Without a serious Russian threat to European security, US attention shifted to mid-level powers that have had ambitions to acquire non-conventional weaponry and the means to deliver it, such as Iran and Iraq. This policy vision lacked the simplicity of containment, but it would impact Turkey significantly. Turkey's proximity to many regions in flux or conflict, together with Ankara's long-standing adherence to the NATO alliance, helped Washington to re-interpret this country's geo-strategic importance. The Iraq War, however, is likely to alter these calculations further.

Simply put, on the eve of the Iraq War, Turkey's importance for the US could be summarised along four dimensions.

- First of all, it served as a potential platform for the projection of US power. Saddam Hussein's resilience in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War had made Ankara essential to sustain the UN sanctions regime and more importantly, Washington's containment policy. From the Incirlik base in Turkey, US and British airplanes (as part of Operation Northern Watch) routinely patrolled the no-fly zone over Northern Iraq in an effort to keep Saddam Hussein's forces away from Kurdish-controlled parts of Iraq. It is difficult to see how the US could have sustained its policy of sanctions, regime isolation and the protection of the Kurdish population without Turkey's cooperation.
- Secondly, Turkey was a bulwark standing in the way of revisionist regimes such as Iran's, intent on changing the regional landscape. Turkey's strong links to the US, NATO and the West were in direct opposition to some of the Iranian regime's regional preferences (if not

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<sup>1</sup> This section draws on Barkey, Henri J. (2003), "The Endless Pursuit: Improving US-Turkish Relations", in Abramowitz, Morton (ed.) (2003), *The United States and Turkey: Allies in Need*, New York: Century Foundation.

designs). Hence, even in the event of cordial relations with Ankara, no Iranian government can ignore Turkey's reaction in its regional calculations. The improving relations between Turkey and Israel throughout the 1990s has changed the strategic setting in the Middle East – although much exaggerated by Arab countries – which served to change the perception of Ankara in Washington as a more balanced regional player.

- Thirdly, what also made Turkey different and valuable is that it is a NATO ally, which takes security seriously; its need for military modernisation notwithstanding, Ankara has a large number of troops under arms that are deployable and is committed to maintaining its spending on defence. Even if the economic crisis has put a dent in its modernisation plans, Ankara intends to continue along this path as the April 2003 decision on purchasing AWACS aircraft demonstrates.
- Finally, Washington's perception of Turkey represented an alternative and successful path for many countries in the Middle East and Central Asia. It is a model to be emulated as NATO's only Muslim member and candidate EU member. In addition to its historical ties to the West, Turkey had a vibrant, albeit flawed, democratic political system and in the 1980s embraced economic liberalisation – well ahead of Latin America; save for Israel, it is the only one to do so in the Middle East.

Ankara's actual contribution to Washington's challenges went well beyond the Middle East. Turks collaborated with the allies in both Bosnia and Kosovo. Turkey steadfastly improved relations with Bulgaria and Romania, took the lead in organising Black Sea regional institutions and thus proved to be a source of stability in the Balkans. Successive US administrations in the early 1990s encouraged Turkey's efforts to reach out to the Turkic Central Asian countries and the Caucasus, to provide them with technical and economic know-how (not to mention political leadership), all designed to counter the growing Iranian and Russian influence in the region. At Washington's request, Turkish forces also took part in the ill-fated Somalia operation. Similarly, in April 2002, Washington prevailed upon Ankara to take over the leadership of the Afghan peacekeeping force in Kabul, the ISAF.

It was Prime Minister and later President Turgut Özal who, after a decade of turbulence, solidified Turkey's image in Washington. He made himself a valued interlocutor during the Iran-Iraq war, and decisively manoeuvred his country in support of US and allied action against Iraq in 1990. While often drawing attention to his Muslim identity and Turkey's unique role in NATO, Özal nevertheless succeeded in convincing Washington of his deep commitment to the West and its values. Despite his traditional upbringing and religious roots, Özal was by far the most pro-American leader Turkey has ever had. He shared none of the suspicions of the US held by his left- and right-wing contemporaries. Having engineered the most far-reaching restructuring of the Turkish economy, he strongly believed in Turkey's ability to become an economic powerhouse of its own allied with the US. With Özal, Washington could envisage in Turkey a more democratic, stable and prosperous ally and, as a result, a better commercial partner.

Turkey's growing strategic value made its internal stability an even more important concern for US policy-makers. Instability in Turkey can potentially lead to the ascendancy of anti-Western forces, be they Islamic or nationalist in orientation, which could then lead to the denial of access to critical military facilities and change the whole environment in the Middle East. The emergence of the twin challenges to the regime in the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the form Kurdish and Islamic political activism has deeply undermined Turkey's self-confidence. Not only has the state gone out of its way to prosecute citizens for the most minor infractions, the civil war against the insurgency led by the Kurdistan Workers' Party

(PKK) and the rise of the Islamic movement have resulted in greater military interference in Turkish domestic political matters. The combination of domestic instability and the military's resurgence has worried Washington decision-makers, in part because the tactics used by the state could end up making matters worse. In addition, the mismanagement of the Turkish economy by successive governments has resulted in the worst economic crisis of the post-World War II period, provoking a US-initiated \$31.5 billion IMF rescue package.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Turkey's EU aspirations have corresponded well with what the US wanted to see develop in Turkey. What the EU process provided Turkey was a path to greater affluence and most importantly, to greater democratisation. In part, it was because of Turkey's inability to implement reforms on its own that made the European Union accession process such an attractive option. Indeed, Washington has genuinely seen Turkey as an integral part of the European security architecture and the European continent. In addition, EU candidacy also offered the prospect of resolving some of the thorniest problems, such as the Cyprian and the Aegean ones. Hence, the EU membership process, even if it is to be realised a decade or more down the road, is more than just a device to improve domestic political conditions. In reality, as far as Washington could see, Turkey as a member of the EU would be fully integrated into the West as a democratic and prosperous country, very much emulating Greece's path.

#### **After Iraq: The future of US-Turkish relations**

On 1 March 2003, the Turkish Parliament narrowly defeated a government motion that would have allowed up to 62,000 American soldiers to be based on Turkish soil for combat operations against Iraq. The loss of the northern front shocked Washington. No one in Washington had expected that Turkey would refuse the US request, because it was understood that Turkey would not leave its primary ally in the cold. This was driven home even more by recent US assistance to Ankara at critical junctures, ranging from help against the PKK insurgency and the capture of its leader in Kenya (effectively putting an end to it), to the 2001 IMF rescue package. The new pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP) government of Turkey mishandled the parliamentary vote. It had reluctantly concluded that its commitments to the US would take precedence over the overwhelming public opposition.

In reality, the negotiations over basing the troops in Turkey lasted much too long, which in turn allowed for opposition to build up. While the focus appeared to be on the economic compensation package that Turkey was going to be offered in exchange for its cooperation, what most observers failed to notice was the difficult nature of the negotiations relating to Northern Iraq. The Turkish military was intent on not only entering Northern Iraq to prevent the creation of a Kurdish state there, but perhaps even preventing the evolution of a federal arrangement in Iraq that could allow the Kurds to win control of the oil-rich cities of Keokuk and Mogul. As part of this strategy, the Turkish General Staff wanted to make sure that Turcomans, a Turkic-speaking ethnic minority in Iraq, would be able to have their own regional government, preferably controlling these same cities. Hence, the entry of Turkish troops there potentially presented the US with a nightmare scenario, because Iraqi Kurdish groups had promised to confront them, militarily if necessary. Moreover, Washington also understood that both the hard bargaining over Northern Iraq and the lukewarm public support by the Turkish officer corps for the government's parliamentary motion was essentially designed to weaken the AKP government domestically and internationally, even at the expense of immediate US needs.

Ironically, the failure of the parliamentary vote meant that Ankara dealt itself out the Northern Iraq game. Its warnings that it would enter Northern Iraq irrespective of an arrangement with

the US troops fell largely on deaf ears; the US and many European Union members warned Ankara of dire consequences. Ankara, therefore, has few good options left in Northern Iraq. It has been reduced largely to the role of an interested observer. In some ways, as far as the US is concerned, this has been the silver lining in the failure of the second front. Had the war lasted longer and caused larger casualties, the political picture would have been different. US Congressional unhappiness with Ankara would have manifested itself in many different forms. Should Ankara attempt to enter Northern Iraq once again to support the Turcomans, against the wishes of the Kurdish groups there, it is likely that US-Turkish relations would suffer terribly.

Barring such an eventuality, Turkish-American relations will remain strong. Of the four dimensions outlined above, only the Iraqi one has been removed. Yet the other issues remain salient, though not with the same sense of significance. With the US shutting down its Operation Northern Watch, which had helped contain the regime in Baghdad, an important source of friction between the two countries will be eliminated. Moreover, Washington's disappointment with Turkey is different this time. In previous disputes, the US always had the Turkish military to fall back upon, but in this instance, the Turkish high command failed the US. Given that the Iraq War was driven by the US Department of Defence (the bastion of prop-Turkey sentiment in Washington), this is likely to have an enduring effect.<sup>2</sup> This will also have repercussions for the Incirlik air base, the mainstay of US forces in Turkey, which is now likely to be severely downgraded. Still, this does not mean that Turkey will not be important to Washington for the foreseeable future. Despite Washington's disappointment with Ankara over the second front, the Bush administration signalled its desire to harmonise relations by disbursing \$1 billion in aid and grants. The package was clearly aimed at making sure that Turkey does not fall off the economic recovery process. What it also means, however, is that the days of ample strategic rents are over.

One potential ramification of these developments is the civilianisation of the Turkish-American relationship. This, however, depends very much on the performance of the new AKP government and does not mean that Turkey's military significance within NATO will be diminished. The AKP administration came to power promising first to focus on improving Turkey's chances with Europe, which in turn meant the furthering of the democratisation process, improving the economy and dealing with Cyprus. Such a development – especially when compared with the Islamic Welfare Party's discourse after its first-place finish in 1995 – was welcome news to Washington. Should the AKP succeed in pushing forward on these fronts, then the Turkish-American relationship could improve significantly. For Washington, Turkey's EU aspirations are important because they represent the shortest route to long-term stability, based on a working democracy and economic prosperity. So far, however, the AKP government has allowed itself to be checkmated (albeit temporarily) on Cyprus by the hard liners in the country and has made little progress, if any, on the other issues. It has wasted its precious time on foreign and domestic policy.

In short, with the disappearance of Saddam Hussein, Ankara lost an important part of its leverage in Washington. Nothing of the same import is out there to replace it; Central Asia, the Caucasus and Iran are important, but Turkey's influence and abilities are not as vital as they were with Saddam's Iraq. Of course, if the Iraq experiment turns foul for the US and a pluralistic regime does not succeed in rooting itself in Baghdad, Turkey will once again loom

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<sup>2</sup> According to one reporter with excellent contacts, in the negotiations leading to the war on Iraq, US Joint Chief of Staff General Myers was reported to have thrown his telephone in anger and frustration after a discussion with his counterparts in Ankara – see Çongar, Yasemin (2003), “Savasin Arka Cephesi”, *Milliyet*, 31 March.

large in the American imagination. For the time being, however, the re-evaluation of Turkey's contribution to the US will open new opportunities in the relationship. Perhaps what the US hopes from this new government is that it tries to emulate Turgut Ozal's approach.

# TURKEY'S STRATEGIC FUTURE

## A RUSSIAN VIEW

NATALIA OULTCHENKO\*

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In an article with a symptomatic title: “Turkish-Russian relations in the shadow of the relations of the two countries with the West”, a well-known Turkish scholar, Gulten Kazgan, states that from the 18th century to the present, Turkish-Russian relations have been governed by the relations that each country has held with the leading Western nations. In other words, their mutual relations are derived from their relations with the West. In the same article, Kazgan described some scenarios for the possible development of the Turkish-Russian relations in the first quarter of the 21st century. One of the scenarios is that if relations with its main western allies (the US and the EU) are not effective and relations with Russia become more so, then Turkey may become more active in regional policy. Consequently, Turkey would develop closer political and economic ties with Russia, while its cooperation with the US in these areas would diminish.

To understand the possible changes in Russian-Turkish relations in the post-war period, this chapter first reviews the latest developments in Turkish-American relations. It argues that the reason for differences between the US and Turkey is not the alternative positions taken by their leaders on the Iraqi problem. The main issue is that close cooperation with the US is a question that generally divides Turkish society. An analysis of relations between Europe and Turkey follows, concluded by the impact that the ties between Turkey and the West have upon relations with Russia.

The new Turkish government, formed by the pro-Islamic Party of Justice and Development, has shown a rather pragmatic character. That explains the government's lack of hesitation in supporting the war operations in Iraq. Because the government is also responsible for the success of its economic policy, it may ultimately find that the price of Islamic solidarity is too high for the new cabinet. The problem is that the government inherited a weak economy, showing few and dim signs of recovery after the crisis in 2001. As the Turkish State Minister Ali Babacan has recognised, options for the government's economic policy are highly limited by the huge state debt and its servicing. According to Minister Babacan, Turkey has to repay \$82 billion in 2003, most of which will be re-borrowed internally and abroad. Thus, any extra financial assistance lightens this exhausting burden.

Before the government's request to send Turkish troops abroad and station foreign troops in Turkey, the US had agreed to grant \$6 billion in aid to Turkey, along with \$24 billion in credit. On the eve of the vote, Prime Minister Recep Erdogan stated: “Those who are against the war today will speak another way after [a] three-day salary delay.” Nevertheless, the request was rejected by the parliament, which is mainly composed of a ruling party for whom justice is more of a party slogan than an area to develop. Meanwhile, there had been mass demonstrations in Ankara that reflected public opposition to the war.

To understand the anti-war spirit in Turkish society, it is important to consider it alongside the desire for independence from the US and the West in general. This spirit greatly intensified during the more recent economic crises, when a large part of Turkish society blamed the

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crises on faulty IMF policy. As the public viewed the situation, the IMF was attempting to substitute Turkey's national government. Parliament's decision proved that Turkish society is divided in its thinking about cooperation with the West as a whole and with the US in particular.

The government did not expect the rejection of its request. Afterwards, the government had to resort to putting economic pressure on both the parliament and society to argue its case effectively. Mr Erdogan cautiously said that the government could not criticise the will of the parliament and that they respected the hesitation of the deputies and the people on this question. Yet he stressed that they should have considered the situation from all sides and that the country's problems could not be solved by a simple vote of 'yes' or 'no'. "The choice made by the parliament is an alternative one", Mr Erdogan explained. That was the government's way of warning about an impending crisis. The inevitable fall of some macroeconomic indicators ensued. As the Russian newspaper *Commersant* noted, the Turkish parliament had effectively voted for a crisis.

The next day, the government announced a package of the new fiscal measures. The government intended to obtain additional funds by increasing taxes and rejecting some social programmes. The Turkish press commented that as the government had lost the American aid, it was going to take it from the people's pocket.

As for the position of the government towards the US, Mr Erdogan pointed out that the government wanted the US to understand the sensitivity of regional policy for Turkey and to minimise US political demands. At the same time, he reminded the US of the deep political roots of their bilateral relations, based on mutual respect. The US pointed out its disappointment at the outcome of the vote, but at the same time the US expressed appreciation for the government's readiness to cooperate. On this basis, the two sides were ready to re-start their negotiations on Iraq. Just before the war started, the Turkish parliament passed a motion allowing American armed forces to use Turkish air space. Thus, it would appear that the economic pressure exerted by the government, together with the diminishing political demands from the US, convinced the Turkish parliament to comply with the government's request.

Immediately afterwards, Turkey sought discussions with the US about economic aid. It was quite clear by then that the \$6 billion aid package was out of question. By the end of March, however, the US announced their intention to support Turkey with a grant of \$1 billion. US Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz persuaded the Senate committee on appropriation (which viewed Turkey as having escaped cooperation) that, "indeed Turks were not cooperating as much as we had expected. It is also wrong, however, to say that they do not cooperate with us [at all]. Making use of Turkey's air space is of great importance for us...When the war crisis is over it would be in our interest [for] Turkey [not to] face economic difficulties. We hope for more cooperation and we consider Turkey our valuable ally."

At the beginning of April, US Secretary of State Colin Powell paid a short visit to Ankara. In his meeting with the press, Mr Powell said that the US expected Turkey to support US military action in Northern Iraq. Mr Powell promised that after the visit, if the US obtained the support they hoped for, the Senate would vote through the aid package for Turkey.

To calm the public debate after Mr Powell's departure from Ankara, the Turkish Republic President Necdet Sezer made a statement, stressing the importance of Turkey's strategic partnership with the US. He emphasised that nothing was going to change in this important relationship between the two countries. Nevertheless, he pointed out that both the Gulf war in

1991 and the new crisis in Iraq had had a negative impact on Turkey, resulting in economic losses. He went on to say that Turkey understood the demands of the US given the circumstances; Turkey was already supporting its ally and would continue to do so. Nevertheless, he said that Turkey also hoped for a similar understanding of its needs. One could, however, gather more insight into Turkey's needs in Sezer's discussion about how important Iraq's future is to Turkey and Turkey's readiness to take part in its determination. Thus, Turkey was ready to aid the US in Northern Iraq, but on condition of receiving the \$1 billion aid package and guarantees on the Kurdish issue as well.

The US recognised Turkey's worries over Northern Iraq from the beginning of the military campaign in the region. Northern Iraq had become de facto independent 12 years ago and it was possible that it would try to use the war as an opportunity to declare its independence officially. For these reasons, the US remained quiet when Turkish troops were sent to Northern Iraq, despite the fact there had not been any agreement with the Turkish government regarding this action. Some days later, the Chief of Turkish General Staff Hilmi Ozkek commented on the situation, saying that the territorial integrity of Iraq and the Iraqi ownership of its oil sources were the main foreign policy principles guiding Turkey. General Ozkek rejected any links between the presence of the Turkish troops in Iraq and Turkey's possible attempts to revise the Mosul question. At the same time, he stressed the fact that Turkey is hardly ready to accept any other territorial changes.

At the beginning of April, the US Congress voted through an aid package of \$1 billion for Turkey. The Turkish newspaper *Milliyet* paid special attention to the speech by one member of the group that had supported Turkey – Congressman Robert Wexler – who said that as a democracy, Turkey was a model for Muslim world. He added that cooperation with Turkey is not a topic for debate but an essential condition for stability in post-war Iraq.

Meanwhile, American officials claimed that they were working with Turkey to prevent any developments in Northern Iraq that would be worrying for Turkey. Thus, it would appear that the two sides had reached some compromise on Iraq after all.

In summary, the important points are:

- The Iraqi crisis proved once again that Turkish society is divided in its views about cooperating with the West, especially with regard to the US. In other words, Turkish society is bipolar in its desire for and ideals of westernisation.
- The ex-President of the Turkish Republic Suleyman Demirel viewed the government's request to station foreign troops in Turkey as provocative and commented that the US should not have made such unrealistic demands.
- Compromise is vital for further development of American-Turkish relations. The prospects for relations will improve when these are based on strategic partnership and mutual interests, rather than a perception of Turkey as just a tool to serve American interests.
- When the US is ready to accept such a foundation for relations with Turkey, it will gain additional flexibility and stability in the complicated conditions of the Middle East.

There is a rather influential lobby in the US that believes American-Turkish relations are strategically important to US interests in the region and is ready for compromise. Nevertheless, until this view is more widely shared, there are not many reasons to continue discussions on the crisis in bilateral relations.

Another important dimension in Turkish foreign policy is its relationship with the EU. Turkey is still far from reaching the EU's criteria for membership in economic or political terms. On several occasions, the government has declared its intention to decrease inflation to a single figure in three years. For this purpose, it actively uses its IMF credits. Nonetheless, after another economic failure, the country has been burdened with a high level of inflation and is even more heavily in debt.

Numerous unsolved political questions remain. It was hardly a coincidence that the European Commission renewed the so-called partnership agreement, outlining the membership requirements for Turkey – including the rights for national minorities – just after Turkish troops were stationed in Northern Iraq. Bearing in mind that Turkish society is already divided in its attitudes towards the West, the EU should consider taking greater account of Turkey's situation. Postponement of Turkey's membership in the EU allows those parts of the Turkish society that do not support Europeanisation to exert more influence.

Although it is not possible to prevent international integration, it is possible to regulate it. The EU membership process offers effective control for the economic and political development of Turkish society. To maintain this control, it is necessary to make Turkey's progress towards membership more evident to Turkish society. The most recent elections showed that a large part of the Turkish population have begun to think that inefficient policy was the result of the absence of Islam (or traditional values). Even if the newly elected pro-Islamic party fails, this section of society may attribute the failure to the overall lack of Islam in public policy. As the democratisation process advances under EU pressure, Turkey is losing the traditional mechanisms that have prevented radical Islam from seeping into policy. Attempts to improve Turkey from a Western point of view and criteria – without enough support for its transformation – could have the unexpected result of turning of an old and well-known ally into a new antagonist.

There is an understanding of this inter-relationship within the EU. Professor J. Luchiani of the European Institute (Florence) noted that Turkey's orientation towards Europe is not a predetermined effect of Turkish foreign policy; it is just a strong (if unsteady) tendency that needs constant support from both Turkey and the EU. This view suggests that Turkey's prospects are promising. Nevertheless, the former US Ambassador to Turkey, Morton Abramowitz pointed out in his interview with *Defence News* magazine that, "It is not clear where Turkey is going to move now, if it [is] going to become a country like Iran or Syria or if it is going to stay in the Western bloc." This is not, however, the moment of choice for Turkey alone. It is also the moment of choice for the US and the EU. The Turkish government has already responded clearly: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Abdullah Gul said that a change of Turkish foreign policy is out of question. It remains to be seen if the majority of Turkish society will share the conviction of the government. The future also depends largely on Turkey's Western allies to revise the outline of mutual relations.

As there are still no definite changes in the course of Turkish foreign policy, there are likewise no serious expectations of dealing with Russian-Turkish relations. Besides, if there is any balancing activity in Russian foreign policy it is mostly a balancing between the Western policy centres. Like Turkey, Russia still considers regional policy as a second-rank vector.

In the short term, Turkey's Western-oriented foreign policy is beneficial for Russia. Turkey's regional outlook has resulted in closer relations with Central Asia and some regions where the Turkic population prevails, more than with Russia as a whole. Despite the fact that bilateral relations these days are not classified as confrontational but as regulating competition, Russia's apprehension of pan-Turkism is still alive. In addition, Russia is the main gas

supplier for Turkey – with a minimum market share of 40%, it already has an efficient control lever. Rem Vyahirev, the former head of the Russian gas company Gazprom, was right when he said that whoever started first in Turkey would win. Now Russia's two gas pipelines are preventing alternative gas projects from realisation and keeping the Turkish gas market under control. Turkey's dependence on Russian gas offers some guarantees of Turkey's political loyalty.

In the long term, Russia and Turkey are both losing out because of their weak regional policies. Both countries are missing the opportunity to become the two leading countries within the new Eurasian centre of world policy. Moreover, the Western approach to problems in the region (over which it already exercises much control) may not always match the interests of either country. But until the advantages of strategic, regional partnership are clearly recognised, neither of the two sides should expect any visible changes in Russian-Turkish relations.

# TURKEY'S STRATEGIC FUTURE

## POST-11 SEPTEMBER IMPACT: THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF TURKEY REVISITED

HÜSEYİN BAGCI AND SABAN KARDAS\*

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The aim of this chapter is to analyse the debate surrounding Turkey and its increasing strategic importance in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terror attacks on Washington and New York. Traditionally, Turkey has been considered important because of its geographic location between Europe, the Middle East and Asia, which gives it easy access to strategically significant regions and major energy resources. Moreover, thanks to its character as a modern Muslim country, culturally Turkey stands as a bridge between Western and Islamic civilisations. Turkey's strategic value became more visible following the events of 11 September 2001, and consequently, Turkey has come under the spotlight. As a result, Turkey and Turkish foreign policy started to receive a great interest and the mood in the discussions about the country and its strategic worth was usually optimistic. The discourse was, however, mainly historic, temporal and isolated from reality, and the focus was very narrow. It was often lost in the debate that, seen in a wider perspective, there are a number of other factors that indicate the necessity of taking a more cautious and balanced approach. In this sense, the tone of this chapter is rather critical. First, we briefly summarise the main arguments used to emphasise an enhanced strategic role for Turkey in the new era. Each argument is approached critically and the shortcomings of the argument underlined. The chapter concludes with an attempt to develop a more balanced interpretation of post-11 September developments upon Turkish foreign policy.

### **Growing acceptance of Turkish theses on the fight against terrorism, or 'you-see-we-were-right!' syndrome**

The first effect of the 11 September attacks that contributed to Turkey's current position was the alleged growing acceptance of the Turkish approach to the fight against terrorism in international relations. Turkey itself had long struggled against separatist terror and political Islam in a domestic context. Since the 1970s, Turkey has been engaged in fighting against terrorism and continues to be one of the major targets of terrorist activities at home and abroad. Turkey's first encounter with international terrorism was the political assassinations carried out by ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) against Turkish diplomats abroad in the 1970s. During the last two decades, the Kurdish issue in particular and the terrorist activities of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) involved cross-border aspects and became an international concern.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, one part of the Turkish strategy to deal with this problem was to seek international cooperation in fighting terrorism. In this regard, successive Turkish governments endeavoured to generate international concern about terrorism in general. They worked hard to convince European countries to limit the

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the PKK, see the extensive analysis provided in Özcan, Nihat Ali (1999), *PKK (Kürdistan İsci Partisi): Tarihi, İdeolojisi, ve Yöntemi (PKK: Its History, Ideology and Methodology)* Ankara: ASAM Yayınları. For the international dimension of the PKK's emergence and operations, see Radu, Michael (2001), "The Rise and Fall of the PKK", *Orbis*, Vol. 45, No. 1, Winter, pp. 222-325 and Kirisci, Kemal and Gareth Winrow (1997), *The Kurdish Question and Turkey*, London: Frank Cass, pp. 47-63.

activities of various separatist, leftist and Islamic organisations. As part of its activities, Turkey even tried on some occasions to bring the terror issue onto NATO's agenda.<sup>2</sup>

Besides trying to raise the terror issue in several political and diplomatic fora, Turkey did not hesitate to resort to military instruments as well. To meet the rising challenge of separatist terror in southeastern Anatolian region, Turkey employed a stubborn and at times harsh policy based on heavy reliance on military measures. The policy sought to stop the terror activities carried out by the PKK, then root out the formation of terrorist groups and their support bases. In a similar vein, emphasis on the use or threat of force outside its borders as part of the fight against terrorism was a logical extension of this policy. Numerous instances of Turkish incursions into Northern Iraq are cases in point. The authority vacuum that emerged after the imposition of a no-fly zone in Northern Iraq enabled the PKK to use the region as a rear base to conduct terrorist attacks inside Turkish territory. Based on a somewhat complicated mix of the notions of 'hot pursuit' and self-defence, Turkish armed forces were dispatched into Northern Iraq to destroy PKK guerrillas, training camps and to prevent PKK from planning or executing subversive attacks on Turkish soil. Although some of those operations were limited in scope, some were large-scale involving thousands of troops – at times the number of Turkish soldiers crossing the border reached 35,000 – backed by tanks, artillery and helicopters.

In its relations with Syria (as far as its support for PKK terrorism is concerned) Turkey offers another example where it resorted to essentially military means. By mid-1998, the PKK had come to rely almost entirely on Syrian support. The PKK's leader, Abdullah Ocalan had been given sanctuary by the Syrian government and Syrian territory was a safe route for PKK militants in their journey between PKK training camps in Lebanon's Syrian-controlled Bekaa valley and the Turkish border. Indeed, during the Turkish-Syrian crisis of October 1998, Turkey used coercive diplomacy, backed by a credible threat of force, against the Syrian regime to end its support for the PKK and cease providing shelter to Ocalan. It is worth noting that, in the meantime, Turkey had already strengthened its military ties with Israel to exert pressure on Syria from the south. Turkey's threat of force accompanied by military manoeuvres undertaken close to the Syrian border bore fruit. Faced with the overwhelming power of the Turkish military, the Syrian government complied with Turkish demands: it asked Ocalan and the PKK to leave the country, which constituted the first step in a chain of events leading to the capture of Ocalan in Kenya. Following their expulsion from Syria, PKK forces relocated to Northern Iraq. Yet a subsequent Turkish incursion into the region dealt a severe blow to their military capabilities causing the PKK's military collapse.<sup>3</sup>

As experience shows, Turkish activities to this end (be it diplomatic or military) were hardly welcomed by its neighbours or by its Western partners; as a result, Turkey could not raise the necessary international support in its own fight against terrorism. Indeed, these issues have constantly been a point of tension and disagreement in Turkish foreign policy throughout the 1990s and Turkey came under severe international criticism. Assertive Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East region added to the already troubled relations with its Arab neighbours. Likewise, Turkey's relations with its Western partners deteriorated from time to time due to the problems stemming from Turkey's struggle with terrorism. Issues surrounding

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<sup>2</sup> It must be underlined, however, that to avoid making the PKK issue an international one and to keep the PKK from becoming an interlocutor, Turkey was cautious in these endeavors. Therefore, it focused on including terror as a whole into NATO statements.

<sup>3</sup> Cornell, Svante E. (2001), 'The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics', *Orbis*, Vol. 45, No. 1, Winter, pp. 31-46.

its battle against terrorism have been a major impediment to Turkey's prospects for closer integration into the European Union. In particular, charges were often raised against the country at several international platforms that Turkey's approach to tackling terrorism was a major source of human rights violations and limitation of individual rights and liberties at home. Therefore, Turkey has always been under European pressure to undertake domestic reforms to ameliorate the situation. As far as foreign policy is concerned, with its principally military-oriented security strategy (in stark contrast to the 'civilian' European approach), Turkey's assertiveness in the region was seen as an indication that Turkey was 'security consumer' or an 'insecurity provider' to European security, and thus an actor to be treated with a certain reservation.<sup>4</sup>

Against this background, it is obvious that Turkey was one of the main beneficiaries of the new international atmosphere. At last, the phenomenon of terrorism and the threat of terrorist activities were formally recognised as an international concern and an international consensus on the issue seemed to emerge. The challenge posed by terrorism to international security was considered so acute that it was enough a justification for the North Atlantic Council to invoke NATO's Article 5 for the first time. From the UN to the OSCE and across other international and regional organisations, the prevailing mood was captured; similar revolutionary decisions were adopted to express the willingness to respond to the perils of terror on an international level. It did not take long for Turkey to grasp this opportunity: the president, the prime minister, the foreign minister and other officials representing the country gave their full and unqualified support to those international initiatives.<sup>5</sup>

This was more than an expression of international solidarity with the US and the victims of those startling attacks. Beyond that, there was a golden opportunity for Turkey to utilise. Turkish elites and intellectuals did exactly that; in each declaration or speech they repeatedly emphasised that the events of 11 September proved the validity of Turkish arguments, reminding their audience that Turkey itself had suffered under terrorism. They went on to express their hope that Turkey's European partners would also realise their past mistakes in criticising Turkey and eventually readjust their policies *vis-à-vis* Turkey in the face of the new realities out there, which had proven Turkey's position had been correct. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer maintained that those attacks should be a lesson for the European countries and called for a change in their attitude towards terrorism. After pointing out that terrorism was a crime committed against all humanity, he said, "That's why we have always repeated in all international platforms that international cooperation in the fight against terrorism should be improved. The attacks on the US have shown how correct Turkey is in its stance against terrorism. I guess the attitudes of European countries have begun to change too."<sup>6</sup>

In the Turkish view, the European countries misinterpreted the balance between the concepts of human rights and terrorism, a point emphasised by a senior Turkish Foreign Ministry official: "The US was very well aware of the concerns raised by Turkey regarding terrorism. Nevertheless, Europeans did not understand this and the concept of human rights was raised by our European colleagues when we referred to terrorism at international gatherings. And

<sup>4</sup> This critical interpretation of Turkey's place in European security architecture can be found in Jung, Dietrich (2001), "Turkey and Europe: Ongoing Hypocrisy?", Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, Working Paper No. 35, September, pp. 1-21; for a counterview, see Müftüler-Bac, Melthem (2000), "Turkey's Role in the EU's Security and Foreign Policies", *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 489-502.

<sup>5</sup> See several Turkish daily newspapers from 12-13 September, 2001. Also, for a collection, see *Newspot*, No. 29, September-October 2001.

<sup>6</sup> "Sezer: I Reckon Western Countries are Going to View Terrorism Differently from Now on", *Turkish Daily News*, 13 September 2001 and *Cumhuriyet*, 13 September 2001.

now, it is clearly seen that a balance between the concepts of terrorism and human rights is necessary.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover, in a similar line, Turkey stressed that terrorism is a global issue and thus must be fought globally. This point was repeatedly emphasised by government officials, as well as columnists and civil society organisations. Foreign Minister Ismail Cem, in his address at the Organisation of Islamic Countries Summit, underlined the argument: “Terrorism does not have geography, it is the same terrorism, which manifests itself in several countries, in the West and in the East, in all geographies, all over the world...Therefore, terrorism is a global phenomenon that crosses borders and the fight against it requires effective international cooperation.”<sup>8</sup> In this sense, NATO’s decision to invoke Article 5 was a welcome development for Turkey, as expressed by Ambassador Onur Öymen, Turkey’s Permanent Representative to NATO: “We have always called for terrorist activities to be included within the Article 5...We have always stated that an attack does not only mean a country’s intrusion into another country’s territory but it also covers terrorist attacks which [are] an international problem. That’s why NATO’s invocation of Article 5 is very important for us.”<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, some Turkish analysts did not hesitate to announce the advent of a ‘global 28 February’.<sup>10</sup> In challenging the rise of political Islam on 28 February 1997, secular elites used the particular conditions of Turkey as a justification to limit individual rights and democratic freedoms, backed by the powerful military. After the 11 September attacks, it was argued that the US and Western countries may embark on a similar policy on a global scale, so as to wipe out several international networks (irrespective of whether they are moderate or radical) that were supposedly behind the attacks. As part of this new strategy, the US would be less willing to criticise non-democratic practices in the Islamic world for the sake of assuring their cooperation in the global war against terrorism. That could (the argument goes on), hint at the emergence of a new ‘precedent’ justifying the Turkish way of dealing with terrorism, and in effect, relieve Turkey of some of the external pressures it had encountered in the past.

The first observation about these arguments is that they were, to a large extent, propaganda. It was not possible to hear, from the outside, a corresponding appreciation of the Turkish theses, except perhaps from some American commentators.<sup>11</sup> Notably Michael Radu was a very vocal supporter of the Turkish position on this issue. He argues that “Europeans, at least before 11 September, were playing games in the name of ‘human rights’ – particularly for terrorists, who were protected at home and even against the vital security of non-EU countries...Let us hope that once the US and Turkey, to mention just two cases, are finally seen as equally victimised, the EU response will be similar...That revision also includes a new

<sup>7</sup> “Shifting of International Perceptions on the Agenda: A New Role for Turkey”, *Turkish Daily News*, 13 September 2001; for more on the initial Turkish position, see Ilkin, Baki (2002), “Combating Terrorism and Rebuilding Afghanistan: The Turkish Perspective”, *Foreign Policy-Ankara*, Vol. 27, Nos. 3-4, pp. 3-9.

<sup>8</sup> Cem, Ismail (2001), *Statement to the Press at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference* (Doha, 10 October 2001), reprinted in *Newspot*, No. 29, September-October; see also “Turkish Top Officials Call for Increase in International Cooperation against Terrorism”, *Turkish Daily News*, 13 September 2001; and Balbay, Mustafa (2001), “Terör Sınır Tanımiyor (Terror Recognises no Borders)”, *Cumhuriyet*, 12 September. The Turkish Industrialists and Businessman Association (TUSIAD) also stated that the terrorist attacks exposed the dimensions of international terrorism and that there is a need for international cooperation and solidarity to fight against international terrorism, in *Milliyet*, 13 September 2001.

<sup>9</sup> “Ankara backs Activating Article 5”, *Turkish Daily News*, 14 September 2001 and *Cumhuriyet*, 14 September 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Cakir, Rusen (2001), “Global 28 Subat Süreci Basladi (Global 28 Subat Process has Taken a Start)”, *Hurriyet*, 15 September.

<sup>11</sup> For a similar view, see Belge, Murat (2002), “Jeopolitik”, *Radikal*, 22 January.



look at Turkey's anti-PKK and anti-Islamist policy – not as anti-democratic, but as protective of the Muslim world's only truly secular democracy.”<sup>12</sup> The optimistic mood and Turkish discourse, however, largely remained wishful thinking.

The main problem with this argument was that Turks chose to interpret these developments in such a way that this new ‘precedent’ justified whatever Turkey did in the past to fight against separatism and political Islam. This point was very well illustrated by Ismail Cem: “For years, Turkey has kept on explaining to the international community what terrorism is, the consequences of it, the importance and the need for international cooperation in struggling against it, and have kept on making proposals at international platforms for methods of a collective struggle against terrorism. The events of 11 September have proved how right Turkey's sensitivity on this issue was. What everyone is trying to do collectively today is no different from that which Turkey has strived to achieve for years.”<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the Turkish arguments will be entirely accepted by the West in general or Europeans in particular without any reservations. For instance, Turkey warmly welcomed NATO's activation of Article 5, but one has to bear in mind the particular conditions in which NATO took that decision, and the unique position of the US in shaping decisions in NATO; thus its value as an almost automatic precedent remains an open question. Even if one accepts that Article 5 could be activated against terror attacks, what is less clear is whether it will be applicable to the threats or attacks coming from an organisation established in one's own country. Finally yet importantly, when the time comes to implement Article 5, there could be differences over identifying the concrete sources of a terror threat or how to respond to that particular threat.<sup>14</sup>

Another limitation to Turkey's optimism is exerted by differing views on terrorism. Concerning the Kurdish issue, the European view is broadly that it cannot be simply confined to fighting against terrorism. Official Turkish discourse preferred to view the Kurdish issue as originating from socio-economic conditions in southeastern Anatolia, aggravated by the problems posed by terrorist activities that are supported by external actors trying to undermine Turkey. In European eyes, however, the issues are more related to political and cultural rights, and democratisation.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the well-known analogy is applicable here: one person's ‘terrorist’ may be another person's ‘independent fighter’. Further, there is reason to expect that this will remain the case, despite Turkish initial optimism to the contrary.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, large Kurdish populations in Europe are acting as a strong pressure group and limiting the manoeuvrability of Western governments. As it is rightly claimed, the Kurdish issue has also

<sup>12</sup> Radu, Michael (2001), “The War on Terrorism is not an American War”, *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 3, No. 4, October-December, pp. 52-54.

<sup>13</sup> “Cem: Turkish Model is Paradigm of Civilisation”, interview of Ismail Cem by the *Turkish Daily News*, 7 January 2002.

<sup>14</sup> For an early sceptical approach by Sadi Erguvenc, see Sariibrahimoglu, Lale (2001), “Turkey Should be Cautious on Article 5”, *Turkish Daily News*, 14 September; however Ümit Özdag underlines that although it may not act as an automatic trigger, NATO's invocation of Article 5 could be used as a precedent, as noted in “Interview with Ümit Özdag”, 2023, No. 6, 15 October 2002, p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> For more information on different perceptions of the issue in Turkey and Europe, see Cornell, op. cit., p. 31. For an analysis of the Kurdish issue through a human rights and democratisation perspective, see Kilic, H. Ayla (1998), “Democratization, Human Rights and Ethnic Policies in Turkey”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 91-110.

<sup>16</sup> For an optimistic view that after 11 September, the PKK issue would no longer be considered within the context of an ethnic conflict or independence movement, see Sezal, Rana S. (2001), “Kimlik Politikaları, Terör ve Etnik Catisma Kavramlari: 11 Eylül Sonrasi Türkiye'nin Terör Sorunu”, *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 20, December, p. 100.

been a European one, as it affects the Turkish and Kurdish migrants living in Europe, and the host countries.<sup>17</sup> There is a fundamental difference between the EU and Turkey in regards to the problem of terrorism. Even after one accepts the reality of terrorism, the ways to tackle this problem are perceived differently. The Turkish approach is closer to that of the US than the EU.<sup>18</sup> As we observe, the EU and the US differ on many issues, including the question of how to identify the causes and sources of terrorism as well as the means to be used in fighting against it. The EU has stressed the importance of preventive measures and prioritising political and economic instruments, and has questioned the effectiveness of punitive military measures. Considering that the Europeans were even critical of the US, expecting that they would welcome Turkish activities without any reservations is hardly tenable.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, it is hard to be very optimistic and expect a major breakthrough in Western responses to Turkey's approach to combating terrorism.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Turkey's hope that the new emerging consensus on terrorism will relieve it of European pressures on the Kurdish issue is difficult to sustain. The Europeans will likely resist subsuming this wider problem under the rubric of terror and maintain their demands for Turkey to continue with the necessary domestic reforms in political and cultural aspects, even after the attacks of 11 September. Thus, the Kurdish issue will not cease to be one of the hurdles Turkey has to face in its journey towards the European Union. The discussion about the list of terrorist organisations prepared by the EU, within the context of forging an international coalition against the sources of terrorism, was illustrative of this point; one can expect similar differences in the future. This particular story developed as follows:

Turkey has started an intensive diplomatic initiative in the wake of the 11 September attacks to utilise the international environment to convince EU members to include ten Turkish organisations on its list of terrorist organisations. The inclusion of an organisation on the list means that its assets will be frozen, its offices closed and its activities traced. Nevertheless, this may not automatically translate into the extradition of its members to their country of origin, particularly if the country is a non-EU member and still practices the death penalty. Despite Turkey's efforts, the EU included none of the terrorist organisations on its list, which was published on 27 December 2001. The exclusion of the armed militant groups from the first version of the list, such as the outlawed PKK and the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C), which are active in some European countries under different banners, especially drew Turkish reaction and left a problem on the agenda for some time.<sup>21</sup> Turkish diplomacy and lobbying worked; thus on 2 May 2002 the two organisations were finally added to the modified EU list. This decision was seen by many as a victory for Turkey.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> See for instance: Gürbey, Gülistan (2000), "Die Europaesierung des Kurdenkonflikts", *Blaetter für Deutsche und Internationale Politik* (4:99), p. 404.

<sup>18</sup> Karaosmanoglu, Ali L. (2001), "Afganistan Savasi'nin Transatlantik Iliski Boyutu (The Transatlantic Relations of the Afghanistan War and its Consequences with Regard to Turkey)", *Zaman*, 27 November, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> For an argument to the effect that Turkey could capitalise on US interpretation of terror and thus solve its own PKK problem, see Aras, Damla (2002), "Minareyi Calan Kilifi Hazirladi: Bir Baska Acidan 11 Eylul", *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 24, April, p. 39.

<sup>20</sup> Ali Nihat Özcan, a Turkish expert on terrorism, also points out that the selective response to terror in Europe would limit Turkey's utilisation of the new conditions in "BM Karari ve PKK", *NTV: Arka Plan*, 3 October 2001. For transcript of this television interview, see <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/news/110594.asp> (news portal).

<sup>21</sup> Gültasli, Selcuk (2002), "The Opportunity and the Principle", *Turkish Probe*, Issue 479, 31 March.

<sup>22</sup> "Türkiye Brüksel'de Zafer Kazandi (Turkey won a victory in Brussels)", 3 May 2002, retrieved from <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com.tr> (news portal).

Yet, to see the effectiveness of these measures, one has to take into consideration a couple of other factors.

First of all, the PKK announced in April that it would cease all activities and regroup under a new name, the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK).<sup>23</sup> KADEK said it was ending its armed struggle to campaign peacefully for greater rights for Kurds in southeast Turkey, but without disbanding its armed wing. The Turkish government has termed the name change as meaningless.<sup>24</sup> Yet despite Turkey's demands, KADEK is not included on the EU list. The EU countries prefer to suspend their judgement on whether to include KADEK on the list.

Secondly, these EU norms need to be transformed into national legal orders. That being said, in some of the EU member states, the national legal norms are not enough to limit the activities of these terrorist organisations effectively, a point that has been utilised by the operatives of those organisations. This is especially true as far as Belgium is concerned.<sup>25</sup> Thirdly, most of these organisations have been active in Europe for decades and they know the ways to circumvent such legal barriers. For instance, a spokesperson for the DHKP-C has claimed that these decisions will not substantially affect their activities.<sup>26</sup> What the EU member states can do, however, is freeze their bank accounts – but they have no money in banks. The same source further claimed that the name DHKP-C is on the EU list, but that the registered name of their organisation is the DHKP and DHKC, and mentioned the fact that they have been working in the United Kingdom for many years, even though the DHKP-C is outlawed there. They may have more ways to find loopholes in European legal norms. Therefore, Turkey still has to work hard in order to ensure the effectiveness of this initiative.

### **Caught between 'Islam' and 'terrorism': Turkey as a 'role model' for the Islamic world?**

The second development regarding Turkey's growing strategic importance is the increasing reference to Turkey as a model for the Islamic world. The war against the Taliban and the al-Qaeda was, in a political and intellectual sense, also a war against a militant, reactive, anti-Western (or anti-American) interpretation of Islam. The protests against American operations and support for Osama bin-Laden in some parts of the Islamic world created fears that the developments could lead to a so-called 'clash of civilisations', or a 'Christian-Muslim confrontation'. Thus, the American administration strived to use every opportunity to prevent such a negative interpretation of the American role and to deliver a message that this was not a war against Islam. As proof of this policy, the inclusion of certain Muslim countries into the international coalition appeared to be necessary, especially when it later came to using force in Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup> In this light, Turkey emerged as a valuable asset for American policy.

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<sup>23</sup> Birand, Mehmet Ali (2002), "PKK or KADEK", *Turkish Daily News*, 2 April.

<sup>24</sup> Özcan, Ali Nihat and Ö. Rengin Gün (2002), "PKK'dan KADEK'e: Degisim mi Takkiye mi?", *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 25, May, pp. 5-20.

<sup>25</sup> "DHKP-C and PKK on EU Terrorist List", *Turkish Daily News*, 3 May 2002; "Belgian Judicial Officials: There is not much to do against the PKK and DHKP-C", *Turkish Daily News*, 6 May 2002.

<sup>26</sup> "DHKP-C: The List did not Affect Us", *Turkish Daily News*, 10 May 2002.

<sup>27</sup> "With Turkey's Pledge, US Coalition Gets its First Muslim Troops", *International Herald Tribune*, 2 November 2001.

No doubt, Turkey offered all assistance within its capability to the international coalition from the very beginning, through allowing the use of its territory and air space for logistical support and through its contribution to the international peacekeeping force in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, this was more than a practical military/strategic contribution in the long-term war against the forces of terrorism and fanaticism. Hence, the fact that Turkey is the only Muslim country with a secular system of governance, which is also member of NATO and other European institutions, was repeatedly expressed not only by the Turkish policy-makers themselves, but also by the international observers and US officials. As such (the argument goes), Turkey would be a perfect role model for the Islamic world.

The 21st conference of the American-Turkish Council (ATC) held in Washington in March 2002 was an important venue where those arguments were often heard. A few days before the conference, Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz underlined that supporting moderate Muslims who abhor terrorism and extremism was central to winning the war on terrorism: “To win that war against terrorism, we have to reach out to the hundreds of millions of Muslims who believe in tolerance and moderation...By helping them to stand up against terrorists, we help ourselves.” Therefore, the anti-terrorism campaign was not just a military fight but also “a battle for hearts and minds as well”; within this context, Turkey “can be an example for the Muslim world” of a country that reconciles Islam with liberal democracy.<sup>28</sup> According to US President George W. Bush, Turkey was a hope-provoking alternative against radicalism and religious intolerance. In the message he sent to the ATC conference, he stressed that Turkey, with its Muslim beliefs and its embracing of the democratic ideals of Atatürk, set an example.<sup>29</sup> In his address at the conference, US Deputy Secretary of State Marc Grossman also underlined one of the few things that had not changed after 11 September: “Turkey is once again highlighted as a model for those countries with an Islamic heritage who choose to be – and work to be – modern, secular, democratic, and true to their faith simultaneously. Those of us who have admired Turkey for this vision for years now find we are not so alone in wishing that your great endeavour succeeds.”<sup>30</sup>

Yet the very fact that the terrorist activities were undertaken by an organisation justifying its actions by reference to Islam was a serious moral challenge to which many Muslim countries had to respond.<sup>31</sup> There was a considerable effort on the part of the political leaders and intellectuals in the Islamic world to stave off linking terror in general, and 11 September terror attacks in particular, to Islam and Islamic groups. Nowhere was this concern more visible than in Turkey, as a country that, while orienting itself towards Western norms and values, maintained its ties with Islam and the Islamic world. Indeed, it was this duality that put enormous pressure on Turkey to call upon the world to draw a distinction between Islam and terror. Turkish political leaders and intellectuals, like their counterparts in other Islamic countries, took pains to emphasise that Islam was a religion of peace and a distinction

<sup>28</sup> Kelley, Matt (2002), “America Must Support Moderate Muslims to Win War on Terror, No. 2 Pentagon Official Says”, *Turkish Daily News*, 11 March; see also US Department of Defence (2002), “Bridging the Dangerous Gap between the West and the Muslim World”, remarks prepared for delivery by Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz at the World Affairs Council in Monterey, California, 3 May.

<sup>29</sup> “Turkey a Model Secular Country: Bush”, 18 March 2002, retrieved from <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com.tr> (news portal); see also, “21st ATC conference held in Washington”, *Turkish Daily News*, 19 March 2002.

<sup>30</sup> US Department of State (2002), “Grossman: Change in the Value of Enduring Alliances”, remarks to the American Turkish Council by US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman, Washington, D.C., 19 March.

<sup>31</sup> See Malik, Anas (2002), “Selected Reflections on the Muslim World in the Aftermath of 9-11”, *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer, pp. 201-225.

between Islam and terrorism must be drawn. While the prime minister declared that equating Islam with terror was unjust,<sup>32</sup> Foreign Minister Ismail Cem said that, “Terrorism does not have a religion, [or] geography and there can be no justification for terrorism under any circumstances...To identify terrorism with any religion is an insult to all religions. We strongly condemn those who have used the name of our holy religion to define some terrorists. Following the tragedy in the US, Turkey conferred with some fellow members of the OIC [Organisation of Islamic Conferences] and urged its NATO allies as well as the EU members to avoid such misuse.”<sup>33</sup>

In this regard, the OIC-EU summit, which was held in Istanbul on 12-13 February, was an expression of Turkey’s determination to assume its role of bridging the East and the West, calling for harmony, rather than conflict between the two civilisations. The forum turned out to be a useful platform for an intensive exchange of views between representatives of international organisations, high-ranking politicians, opinion-makers, intellectuals from EU-member countries, OIC-member countries and observers. Mutual compliments filled the air, although it remains to be seen what it will bring about in concrete political terms.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, organising such a conference and bringing together EU member states and Muslim countries around the same table had a symbolic meaning, which was seen as the start of the new Turkish role.<sup>35</sup> Ismail Cem’s views on the conference were reflective of this: “An example of what Turkey could do [to play a bridging role between the Islamic world and the Western Christian world] can be seen in the forthcoming meeting of the OIC and the EU. For the first time these two organisations will be coming together for a political exchange of opinions. Besides, in the aftermath of 11 September we are strongly opposed to the wrong perception of placing terrorism and Islam side by side. I had spoken with many of my Western colleagues and [to] draw their attention to the sensitivity of the wording used...In correcting such mistakes and in establishing some sort of a harmony, Turkey has a pioneering place that is provided to it by its history, culture and modern identity. We have to act in awareness of that responsibility.”<sup>36</sup>

This argument implied at least two inter-related aspects: First of all, Turkey’s support for the coalition was instrumental in defusing the charge that the war was a Muslim-Christian confrontation.<sup>37</sup> Foreign Minister Cem expressed this point very well when he said, “This is the fight between democracy and terrorism and the struggle between the wise and fanatic. We believe that this fight will be won by our side. Turkey will be the biggest obstacle before those who want to divert this [fight] to a wrong path such as a fight between the religions”.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> “Ecevit’ten Teröre Karsi Dayanisma cagrisi”, *Hürriyet*, 12 September 2001; see also “ABD’nin Yanındayız”, *Hürriyet*, 13 September 2001; for the response by several Turkish intellectuals, see “Linkage to Islam rejected”, *Turkish Daily News*, 14 September 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Cem, Ismail (2001), “Statement to the Press”; see also US Department of State, “Remarks with Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ismail Cem”, 27 September 2001, retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2001/5089.htm>.

<sup>34</sup> The coverage of the forum in the Turkish Press was retrieved from <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/on-sayfa/oic/oic.htm>; see also the information provided on Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ at [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/OIC\\_EU\\_cdrom/index.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/OIC_EU_cdrom/index.htm).

<sup>35</sup> Ünal, Elif (2002), “West and East Attempt to Bridge Differences in Turkey”, *Turkish Probe*, No. 473, 10 February.

<sup>36</sup> “Cem: Turkish Model is Paradigm of Civilisation”, interview of Ismail Cem by the *Turkish Daily News*, 7 January 2002.

<sup>37</sup> In a sense, this was a duty on Turkey – see Karaosmanoglu, op. cit.

<sup>38</sup> “Bu, Demokrasi ile Terörizmin Kavgasi”, *Hürriyet*, 14 September 2001.

Secondly, the Turkish model was offered as an alternative to a Taliban version of Islam. This means that Islam and modern values are compatible with each other and it is possible to reconcile Islam within a modern, Western-style, democratic and secular system. In the words of Dale F. Eickelman: “Turkey can only offer the world an example of a nation in which Western democratic values and Islam converge in an increasingly strengthened civil society, in which the state and religion are not seen as adversaries. ‘Western’ societies, like Islamic ones, have no place for either militant secular extremism or militant religious extremism”.<sup>39</sup> In practical terms, Turkey’s taking part in the Western-led coalition was expected to facilitate other countries’ adapting a counter-terrorist stance and cooperation with the US.<sup>40</sup> Seen from another perspective, it was also argued that this geo-cultural dimension, in addition to the geo-political position, could constitute another asset for Turkey in its relations with the Western world, particularly as far as its quest to become a full member of the European Union.<sup>41</sup>

Yet the argument that Turkey could be a role model for the Islamic world is also controversial in some aspects. First, Turkish ambitions in this direction are not new and we have enough evidence to judge how they are perceived in other parts of the Islamic world. Turks themselves are proud of being the only secular country in the Islamic world. Yet, it is also equally true that Turkey's perception of itself as a model may not go beyond being an illusion; the Western ideas promoted by Turkey have hardly penetrated into other Muslim societies. Arab countries’ criticism of the secular Turkish model (along with other problems dominating Turkish-Arab relations), are no secret. In this sense, any fundamental shift in the perceptions of other Muslim societies, which would ease the objections to adopting a Turkish-style system, cannot yet be observed. On the contrary, in view of the growing anti-American feelings, it is hard to expect that such a role for Turkey would be welcomed. Moreover, the American way of dealing with terror, through primarily military means or through supporting the existing non-democratic regimes in the Islamic world may hinder the burgeoning reformist movements in those countries. Such an approach may result in setbacks to the natural transformation of Islamic societies, giving radicalism in the Islamic world a new impetus. In this sense, Turkey’s attempts to carry Western values into the region may even widen the existing gap between Turkey and other Islamic societies.

Secondly, the main problem with this argument is the question of whether it is possible at all to transform a society from the outside. As long as domestic enthusiasm for reform is lacking, international pressures to change a society’s culture or its legal, political and economic structures to conform to certain models have limited effect. To influence a society from the outside, international actors must have strong links that enable them to stimulate changes in the behaviour of the domestic actors. For instance, if we remember Turkish-EU relations, despite the existence of strong connections, there is still a resistance to change from the Turkish establishment. Considering the lack of connections, societal differences and geographical distances between Turkey and other Muslim societies, prospects for Turkey’s influence over other Muslim countries remain limited. Likewise, democratic regimes and other practices cannot be established overnight, nor can they be taken granted. It took Turkey decades to reach its current position and this was no doubt a painful process. Turkey’s particular journey also dictates against transplanting its experience into other societies that

<sup>39</sup> Eickelman, Dale F. (2002), “Turkey between the West and the Rest”, *Turkish Probe*, No. 474, 17 February.

<sup>40</sup> Turan, İter (2001), “Short Term Pains for Long Term Pleasures”, *Private View*, Spring, p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> Gökçe, Orhan and Birol Akgün (2002), *Degisen Dünya Politikasında Türkiye'nin Rolü: 11 Eylül'ün Getirdiği Fırsatlar, Riskler ve Tehditler (Turkey's Role in the Changing World Politics: Opportunities, Risks and Threats Brought about by 11 September)*, paper presented at first METU International Relations Conference, Ankara, 3-5 July, p. 14.

have not followed a similar path. On the other hand, even if one assumes that the Islamic world wants and needs change, there is nothing to suggest that this model would be one imposed from Washington, given that Turkey has its own political agenda.

### **A Turkish zone of influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus?**

This section reviews the third area where Turkey's influence is supposedly growing and Turkey is expected to play a role. The war against Afghanistan and terrorism brought the Central Asian, Caspian and Caucasus regions once again into the focus of interest. Some countries in the region, which are mostly ruled by former Communist leaders in an authoritarian manner, were also under pressure from domestic opposition. Since this opposition was mixed with some elements of Islamic radicalism, particularly in the case of Central Asian states such as Uzbekistan, the regimes became active supporters of the international coalition against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Moreover, the prospect of American involvement in the region offered a good chance to those countries for balancing the Russian dominance with the assurance of American support. Consequently, they did not hesitate to respond to American demands and provided the US with access to their air space and military bases.<sup>42</sup> US willingness to widen the international coalition against terrorism diminished concerns for human rights and democratisation; as a result, human rights violations and anti-democratic practices by the governments in the region could be overlooked. The disappearance of human rights considerations in effect facilitated the US cooperation with the Central Asian countries and US engagement in the region.

In developing this relationship, Turkey's special ties with the region again appeared to be an important asset for US policy. Turkey had a lot to offer: not only did Turkey have strong political, cultural and economic connections to the region, but it had also accumulated significant intelligence capability in the area. In addition, the large experience Turkey had accumulated in fighting terrorism could help to expand the global war on terrorism to this region.<sup>43</sup> As the focus of interest shifted to a possible operation against Afghanistan and then to assuring the collaboration of Central Asian countries, Turkish analysts soon discovered that Turkey's geo-strategic importance was once again on the rise. It was thought that, thanks to the easy access to the region offered by its geography and its strong ties with the countries there, Turkey could play a pivotal role in the conduct of US military operations in Afghanistan, along with reshaping the politics in Central Asia. As noted by one analyst, Osman Nuri Aras, "Turkey is situated in a critical geographic position on and around which continuous and multidimensional power struggles with a potential to affect the balance of power at world scale take place. The arcs that could be used by world powers in all sorts of conflicts pass through Turkey. Turkish territory, airspace and seas are not only a necessary element to any force projection in the regions stretching from Europe and Asia to the Middle East, Persian Gulf and Africa, but also make it possible to control its neighbourhood...All these features make Turkey a centre that must be controlled and acquired by those aspiring to be world powers...In the new process, Turkey's importance has increased in American

<sup>42</sup> For more on the motivations and contributions of these countries, see Rasizade, Alec (2002), "The New 'Great Game' in Central Asia after Afghanistan", *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer, pp. 132-134; for more on Uzbekistan, see Güler, Nermin (2001), "Özbekistan Dis Politikasında Dönüm Noktası: 11 Eylül", *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 20, December, pp. 59-65; for the contribution of these countries to the US operations, see Department of Defence (2002), *International Contributions to the War Against Terrorism*, Fact Sheet, 7 June.

<sup>43</sup> Afghanistan is discussed more fully in the next section.

calculations. With a consistent policy, Turkey could capitalise on this to derive some practical benefits... Turkey has acquired a new opportunity to enhance its role in Central Asia.”<sup>44</sup>

Growing international interest in the region had further implications on the energy resources in the Caspian basin and Central Asia. Even before the 11 September events, there had been much talk about a new ‘great game’ in the making on the chessboard of Central Asia and the Caucasus.<sup>45</sup> After the war in Afghanistan, there was a growing belief among many analysts that the centuries-old great game was entering a new phase.<sup>46</sup> According to this line of reasoning, the US military operations in Afghanistan were not simply a response to the attacks of 11 September. Rather, “the plans for the American offensive in Afghanistan were not formulated in response to 11 September, but existed prior to the terrorist attacks in the US. Therefore, it could be argued that the attacks on 11 September provided the US with the opportunity to enter Afghanistan to further extend a project that had already started months, if not years, earlier.”<sup>47</sup> This was attributed to the special geo-strategic significance of Afghanistan: “Afghanistan occupies a strategic position in the geo-political landscapes in general and the geo-politics of the oil and natural gas resources in particular. Afghanistan has been in an extremely significant location spanning South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East...The US administration has significant political, military and economic reasons to try to turn Afghanistan into a base for American military operations in the region. There can be no doubting of Afghanistan’s strategic importance to the US.”<sup>48</sup> One analyst goes as far as to claim that “The hidden stakes in the war against terrorism can be summed up in a single word: oil.”<sup>49</sup> This reading of post-11 September developments in the region found large support among many Turkish analysts. A number of studies raised the same argument, with the implication that those developments contributed to Turkey’s strategic position.<sup>50</sup>

The construction of alternative pipelines to transport oil and gas from the region to the world markets is the crux of the issue, because the Caspian resources are landlocked. The methods and the routes through which the oil and gas are carried to world markets have direct geo-political effects. But it has long been on the agenda, without a definite answer. Turkey had been pressing for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project. The developments in the wake of 11 September turned out to strengthen Turkey’s hand in this issue. The US threw its weight on Turkey’s side and the construction of the pipeline is scheduled to start around September 2002 and finish by the end of 2004.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Aras, Osman Nuri (2001), “Yasanan Yeni Surecte Avrasya Enerji Kaynaklarinin Yeri ve Önemi (The Place and Importance of Eurasian Energy Resources in the New Process)”, 2023, 15 November, No. 7, p.38.

<sup>45</sup> Ahrari, M. E. and James Beal (1996), *The New Great Game in Muslim Central Asia*, McNair Paper 47, Washington, D.C.: National Defence University, Institute for National Strategic Studies; see also Brzezinski, Zbigniew K. (1997), *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geo-strategic Imperatives*, New York, NY: Basic Books.

<sup>46</sup> Rasizade, op.cit., p. 125.

<sup>47</sup> Gökay, Bülent (2002), “The Most Dangerous Game in the World: Oil, War, and US Global Hegemony”, *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer, p. 48.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid (quote by Frank Viviano, which was reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 September 2001), p. 61.

<sup>50</sup> See for example the editorial, “Türkiye, Hazar, ve Afganistan Ekseninde Petro-politik (Petro-politics at the Axis of Turkey, Caspian and Afghanistan)”, 2023, 15 November 2001, No. 7, pp. 8-15; see also Biyikoglu, Nadir (2001), “Afghanistan Gercegi ve Büyük Oyun’a Dönüs (The Reality of Afghanistan and Return to the Great Game)”, 2023, 15 November, No. 7, pp. 16-21; and also Aras, op.cit.

<sup>51</sup> “Bush Voices Support for Oil and Gas Pipelines Leading from Caspian to Turkey”, *Turkish Daily News*, 5 June 2002.



Against this background, within Turkey there is a growing optimism that the cumulative effect of these developments will strengthen Turkey's position within the region and promote a Turkish zone of influence. But this argument has the following limitations. A proactive Turkish engagement with Central Asia and the Caucasus is not a new concept.<sup>52</sup> After they gained independence with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly emerged Turkic states looked towards Turkey as a model. There was also a corresponding great enthusiasm in Turkey for closer relations with the region, as well as Western support to promote the 'Turkish model' that embedded secularism in a predominantly Muslim society, adopted a capitalist-market economy, a multi-party system and prioritised Western orientation. For Turkey, this region was to offer a new area to expand Turkish influence and boost Turkey's geo-strategic value to the West. Turkish ambitions, however, remained largely unrealised and soon that model started to decline in the face of the political realities of the region and changes in Western perceptions over time.<sup>53</sup> The demise of the Turkish model was mainly due to internal constraints: Turkey lacked enough financial and economic resources to meet the expectations of these countries. Given that the structural obstacles to Turkey's influence in the region such as the compatibility of the Turkish model, the receptivity of the target governments, the role of other players (particularly Russia) and the constraints domestic problems put on Turkish foreign policy, expectations of expanding Turkey's role post-11 September are difficult to sustain. Considering that Turkey continues to struggle to overcome its own economic and financial problems, the question arises as to how it will be able to engage in an active new role in the region.

Yet the developments so far imply that Turkey's relations with the region in the new era are seen differently. Previously, Turkey was perceived as a model for the economic, social and political transformation of these countries. This time, the role expected from Turkey is limited to the military and strategic fields. Turkey has concluded several new military cooperation and education agreements in the region in addition to the existing ones. After 11 September, Turkey stepped up its military assistance to Uzbekistan<sup>54</sup> and Kazakhstan<sup>55</sup> (and to a lesser extent to Kyrgyzstan),<sup>56</sup> by supplying arms, military equipment and military training to modernise the military capabilities of these nations. Moreover, after those countries allowed the US to use their airspace and military bases prior to the military campaign in Afghanistan, Turkish Air Force Command personnel conducted site surveys for possible airfields in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to be used in air operations.<sup>57</sup>

Likewise, post-11 September developments and ensuing US interest in the region had spill over effects in the Caucasus, which provided an added impetus to Turkish activity in the region. Besides the positive steps taken on pipeline projects and Turkey's close relations with Azerbaijan, Turkish-Georgian cooperation in the military field remarkably accelerated. Turkey had already started providing military assistance to Georgia in 1997. After the

<sup>52</sup> Fuller, E. Graham and Ian O. Lesser (1993), "Turkey's New Eastern Orientation", *Turkey's New Geopolitics: From the Balkans to Western China*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview/RAND pp. 37-97.

<sup>53</sup> Bal, Idris (2000), *Turkey's Relations with the West and the Turkic Republics: The Rise and Fall of the 'Turkish Model'*, Aldershot: Ashgate.

<sup>54</sup> "Turkey Equips, Trains Uzbek Military", *Turkish Daily News*, 7 March 2002; "Kivrikoglu Visits Uzbekistan; Signs Deal for Military Assistance", *Turkish Daily News*, 19 March 2002.

<sup>55</sup> RFE/RL *Central Asian Report*, Vol. 2, No. 11, 21 March 2002.

<sup>56</sup> "Turkey, Kyrgyzstan Aim at Strategic Partnership", *Turkish Daily News*, 22 February 2002.

<sup>57</sup> US Department of Defence (2002), *International Contributions to the War Against Terrorism*, Fact Sheet, 7 June, p. 12.

decision taken by the US to establish a military presence in Georgia,<sup>58</sup> Turkey's efforts to cooperate with Georgia became especially important.<sup>59</sup>

Aside from these military contributions, Turkey tried to raise a common concern for terrorism in the region through bilateral visits, as well as on multilateral platforms. From 29 to 30 April 2002, the Presidents of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia held a summit in the Turkish city of Trabzon and signed an agreement to work together against terrorism, along with promising cooperation on pipelines to bring the energy-rich region's resources to the West. The summit was completed by a joint press conference with the three leaders after signing the agreement on "The Struggle against Terrorism, Organised Crime and other Important Crimes" (Trabzon, April 2002).<sup>60</sup> Similarly on 4 June 2002, a summit for "Cooperation and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia" was held in Kazakhstan's capital Almaty, which brought together heads of state of Turkey, China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Palestine, Israel, Egypt, Iran, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Azerbaijan. The leaders signed the "Declaration Aimed at Eradicating Terrorism and for Supporting a Dialogue between Civilisations" (Almaty, 2002), as well as an accord that included regulations, principles and commitments for establishing a comprehensive security mechanism.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation organisation (BSEC) on 25 June 2002 in Istanbul was another occasion where terrorism was discussed at a regional scale.<sup>62</sup>

All of these events imply that what is actually required from Turkey is for it to play a 'subcontractor' role in the region, to facilitate an American presence there within the wider context of the war on terrorism, rather than create a genuinely independent Turkish zone of influence or promote the Turkish model once again. Therefore, Turkey's ambitions and manoeuvrability are very much limited by international interests in the region. Moreover, a policy based primarily on limited contributions in the military field while lacking an economic dimension would be flawed. It is bound to remain temporary and once the conditions have changed, and the region returns to normalcy, the underlying realities may re-surface, leaving Turkey at a disadvantage in political and economic terms.

This observation is strengthened by a parallel development in the way this region is treated by the international power centres. These countries are geographically landlocked with no direct

<sup>58</sup> "US Military in Georgia Will Increase Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline Security", *Turkish Daily News*, 7 March 2002; for the effects of this new development on the region, see Agacan, Kamil (2002), "ABD'nin Gürcistan'a Asker Göndermesi: Terörle Mücadelede Üçüncü Cephe mi, Yoksa Köprübasi mi?", *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 24, April, pp. 69-76.

<sup>59</sup> "Turkey Donates Vehicles, Communications Equipment to Georgian Military", *Turkish Daily News*, 7 March 2002; see also "Turkey Gives Military Aid to Georgia", *Turkish Daily News*, 12 June 2002. It should further be noted that the US policy towards Azerbaijan has also changed: in December 2001, Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act (preventing US from giving direct US government assistance to Azerbaijan) was revoked.

<sup>60</sup> "Caucasus Cooperation Agreement against Terrorism Signed", *Turkish Daily News*, 1 May 2002. An agreement was reached on holding the summit regularly in the coming years, as noted in *Disisleri Güncesi*, April 2002. It was criticised, however, because it failed to include some key players of the region, notably Russia, Armenia and Iran – see Kanli, Yusuf (2002), "A Summit with Missing Key Players", *Turkish Daily News*, 1 May. For more on the impact of the summit on the region, see Kanbolat, Hasan (2002), "Türkiye-Azerbaycan-Gürcistan Zirvesi ve Bölgedeki Ortak", *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 3, No. 26, June, pp. 52-57.

<sup>61</sup> *Newspot*, No. 33, May-June 2002. In his address at the summit, President Sezer re-emphasised Turkey's experience in fighting terrorism and the importance of international cooperation in tackling this issue – see President's Press Office (2002), *Asya'da Isbirligi ve Güven Artirici Önlemler Konferansi Zirve Toplantisi'nda Yaptiklari Konusma*, 4 June.

<sup>62</sup> "Black Sea Economic Cooperation Tackles Energy and Terrorism", *Turkish News*, 26 June 2002.

connections to open seas. Furthermore, they are also far from the prosperous Western markets. In the short term, they may not be able to attract significant foreign capital, except energy investments. They will probably be seen as ‘raw material suppliers’, rather than as ‘emerging markets’; in other words, they will not be viewed as ‘Asian tigers’ nor just Central and Eastern European countries, but new ‘Gulf states’. For this reason, in the foreseeable future, the prospects for these countries to be part of the global market economy and move towards democratic, pluralistic regimes are limited. They will be approached from a strategic perspective, and therefore, it is against this background that Turkey's pivotal role in the region can be better understood. In this context, as far as the optimism surrounding the construction launch of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline is concerned, it must be noted that a number of other developments could diminish the benefits of the pipelines to Turkey. Moreover, high construction costs, possible developments concerning alternative routes (such as Afghanistan)<sup>63</sup> and the tactics to be employed by other players could have adverse effects on the feasibility of the project.

A more concrete reality, which speaks against Turkish ambitions in this region, is the changing shape of US-Russian relations. Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia has chosen a non-confrontational type of relationship with the US. Meanwhile, Mr. Putin has made great progress towards restoring Russian power and influence in the region (and cementing Moscow's primacy), without being opposed by Washington.<sup>64</sup> In this regard, following 11 September, Russia cooperated with the US and did not resist US military deployment in Central Asia and the Caucasus. At the same time, partly in return for its concurrence with US engagement in the region, Russia also tried to utilise the international atmosphere and the discourse of fighting against terrorism to justify its own activities in the region, thus strengthening its position.<sup>65</sup> Based on these developments, there are some arguments that a US-Russian rapprochement may provide better security and stability in the region; thus, the US should also recognise Russian interests there. If events follow such a course, problems will ensue for Turkey, since Turkey and Russia have been competing with each other in this area.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, it must be noted that many analysts refer to prospects for cooperation between the countries. Throughout the 1990s, contrary to earlier expectations, both sides had prioritised economic interests and Turkish-Russian relations developed cooperatively.<sup>67</sup> Similarly it is argued that cooperation, rather than competition, will continue to characterise

<sup>63</sup> “Afghanistan is on Agenda Again as Energy Route”, *Turkish Daily News*, 24 May 2002; for an analysis on the impact of the war on the BTC pipeline, see Pala, Cenk (2002), “Afganistan Savasi'nin Hazar Boru Hatti Projelerine Etkisi: ‘Kirmizi Kalem’ bu Kez Kimin Elinde?”, *Stratejik Arastirmalar Dosyasi*, Vol. 3, No. 11, pp. 17-24.

<sup>64</sup> Larrabee, Stephen F. (2001), “Russia and its Neighbors: Integration or Disintegration”, in Kugler, Richard L. and Ellen L. Frost (eds) (2001), *The Global Century, Globalization and National Security, Volume II*, Washington, D.C.: National Defence University Press, pp. 859-874.

<sup>65</sup> For an analysis of the new developments, see Soltan, Elnur (2001), “Bush-Putin Zirvesi: Soguk Savas’, in Ikinci Bitisi”, *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 20, December, pp. 5-24; however, Ozdag notes that rather than willingly consenting to US deployment in Central Asia, Russia had to bow to US pressure, see Ozdag, Ümit (2001), “Terörizm, Küresel Güvenlik ve Türkiye”, *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 19, November, p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> For an early warning that Turkey's ‘bridging role’ may shift to Russia, see Binay, Mehmet (2002), *Ankara Köprü Rolünü Devrediyor (Ankara is Handing over its Bridging Role)*, 5 October, <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com.tr> (news portal).

<sup>67</sup> Sezer, Duygu Bazoglu (2001), “Turkish-Russian Relations a Decade Later: From Adversary to Managed Competition”, *Perceptions*, Vol. 6, No. 1, March-May, pp. 79-98.

relations after the events of 11 September 2001. Such cooperation could be extended beyond bilateral relations and include a multidimensional partnership in Eurasia.<sup>68</sup>

### **What role does Turkey have in Afghanistan?**

As it has been made clear so far, Turkey emerged as one of the leading actors in the fight against terrorism, hence it rigorously supported the international coalition against the Taliban and the al-Qaeda. When it became clear that the 11 September attacks had originated from Afghanistan and a military campaign was inevitably going to take place, the government was quick in obtaining a parliamentary authorisation in October 2001 to contribute troops to the US campaign. The bill, which was met with public opposition,<sup>69</sup> also authorised the government to allow the stationing of foreign troops on Turkish territory and permit the use of Turkish airspace and airbases.<sup>70</sup> Yet military Chief of Staff General Hüseyin Kivrikoglu and other top officials expressed their hope that the scope of the conflict and Turkey's direct contribution would be limited. Reflecting the overall ambivalence of the Turkish elite, Mr. Kivrikoglu maintained that Turkey cannot remain aloof to the developments in Afghanistan, but at the same time called for a limited Turkish role, which left out an active Turkish contribution in combat operations.<sup>71</sup>

The Turkish government, however, decided to contribute to the campaign by sending a unit of special forces to work with US troops in humanitarian operations and train Northern Alliance fighters. Turkey also hinted that it could make its experience in guerrilla warfare available and help carve out a coalition between various Afghan factions against the Taliban. Additionally, the US benefited from Turkish airspace, used Incirlik airbase as a transport hub for the campaign, and according to some reports, was supplied intelligence by Turkey.<sup>72</sup> But the rapid collapse of the Taliban rule made the possible role of Turkish soldiers in the actual combat phase unclear and a new rationale emerged. When the Taliban rule in Afghanistan came to an end, it became possible to launch international initiatives to rebuild the country and the role of Turkey was again undeniable. Although it was not able to make a significant contribution in terms of financial reconstruction aid, Turkey actively participated in the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF), charged with assisting the newly formed interim Afghan authority and with providing order and stability in the capital, Kabul. Within the framework of the ISAF, Turkey contributed to the training of a national Afghan police and military force, provided military aid and equipment, and patrolled Kabul and its environs.

<sup>68</sup> This is justified by referring to a document called the Eurasia-Action Plan, signed in November 2001 by the foreign ministers of the two countries (see Karaosmanoglu, op.cit.). In his New Year's address, Foreign Minister Cem also underlined that Turkey perceived Russia more as a partner than a competitor in *Disisleri Güncesi*, January 2002. Similarly, Turkey's reaction to US-Russian rapprochement was positive, "Turkey Pleased with US – Russian Rapprochement", *Turkish Daily News*, 29 May 2002, where even a change in Russia's attitude towards Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline is noted. For the evolution of the Russian position, see Ogan, Sinan (2002), "Kremlin ve Lukoil Arasinda Rusya'nin Baku-Ceyhan Politikasi", *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 3, No. 26, June, pp. 68-76.

<sup>69</sup> "Majority Opposes Attack on Afghans", *Turkish Daily News*, 4 October 2001.

<sup>70</sup> Turkey had already provided the US with overflight rights in September shortly after attacks: "Turkey opens Airspace to US", *BBC News Online*, 22 September 2001.

<sup>71</sup> See Turkish daily newspapers from 3 October 2001; for different reactions, see "Asker Gönderme İçin ne Demislerdi?", 2 November 2001, <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com.tr> (news portal); this initial ambivalence and 'passivism' was, however, criticised by some analysts, see Özdag, *Terörizm, Küresel Güvenlik*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>72</sup> "Analysis: Turkey's Pivotal Position", *BBC News Online*, 18 October 2001.

Moreover, in June 2002, when the British mandate was over, Turkey assumed the lead-nation role and took over the command of the International Security and Assistance Force.<sup>73</sup>

Based on these developments, it is claimed by most analysts that Turkey is going to become a more assertive power, not only in its immediate neighbourhood, but also 'out of area'. In Turkish reasoning, its active support for the US military campaign was a logical corollary of its position on fighting international terrorism. According to Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, it was natural that Turkey joined a war against terror because the US had always stood behind Turkey. He emphasised that the war had to be fought to the end, until the Taliban regime was wiped out.<sup>74</sup> For Turkey, at the same time, capitalising on the US-led war on terrorism was a useful instrument to enhance its influence in Central Asia. By taking strategic decisions and an active part in the military realm, Turkey sought to have a say in the future political landscape of not only Afghanistan, but in Central Asia overall. As regards to active participation in ISAF, this was in line with its policy on peace operations, as it had evolved in the post-cold war era. Turkey has been involved in several UN and NATO peacekeeping missions, from Somalia to Bosnia and Kosovo. This time, through participating actively in the ISAF and commanding a multinational force, it could show its military capabilities and ability to project power abroad, thus expanding the Turkish sphere of influence.<sup>75</sup>

More concretely, Turkey sought compensation for its military support in the economic domain.<sup>76</sup> The Turkish economy, already undergoing a severe crisis and under an IMF program, was hit by the 11 September shock badly. Turkish Economic Minister Kemal Dervis, after claiming that Turkey must support the international fight against terrorism because it had suffered greatly from similar threats, hinted that there could be a price. According to him, "Turkey's strategic importance for the European Union and NATO is increasing and within this strategic framework Western allies should consider the cost that Turkey will have to bear."<sup>77</sup> A similar reasoning was used by Prime Minister Ecevit for justifying assistance to the US.<sup>78</sup> In practical terms, that meant the delay of loan repayments, and when necessary, the provision of new IMF loans as well as direct US assistance.<sup>79</sup>

In the same vein as the general arguments about Turkey being an example to the Muslim world, it was also claimed that Turkey could become a model for Afghanistan as well. The war against Afghanistan offered the possibility to replace the fundamentalist Taliban regime to which Turkey had been consistently opposed, and was an important reason behind Turkey's support for the American war. Prime Minister Ecevit was one of the vehement

<sup>73</sup> For the Turkish debate on ISAF, see Kardas, Saban (2002), "Dilemmas of Peacebuilding: Reflections on Turkey's Drive for ISAF Command", *Features, Turkish Daily News*, 19 April.

<sup>74</sup> "Basbakan Sayın Bülent Ecevit'in TBMM'de Yaptıkları Konuşma", *Disisleri Güncesi*, 10 October 2001; see also "Basbakan Sayın Bülent Ecevit'in CNN International Televizyonu'na Verdikleri Mülakat", *Disisleri Güncesi*, 12 October 2001.

<sup>75</sup> "Leadership to Test Turkish Military Might", *Turkish Daily News*, 3 May 2002.

<sup>76</sup> For more on Turkey's motives, see "Afganistan Politikamızı Ulusal Cıkarlarımız ve Tercihlerimiz Belirliyor", interview with Huseyin Bağcı, 2003, No. 7, November 2001, pp. 22-27; see also Erol, Mehmet Seyfettin (2002), "Fırsatlar ve Zorluklar İkileminde Türkiye-Afganistan İlişkilerinde Yeni Dönem", *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 23, March, pp. 77-85; see also Makovsky, Alan (2002), "Turkey's Unfinished Role in the War on Terrorism", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 4, No. 1, January-March, pp. 44-45; and also Pope, Hugh (2002), "Turkey's Role in Afghanistan Presents Opportunity", *Wall Street Journal*, 6 June, p. A16.

<sup>77</sup> "Turkey Rattled by Conflict Fears", *BBC News Online: Business*, 17 September 2001.

<sup>78</sup> "Turkey Promises Troops for Afghan Campaign", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 3, No. 4, October-December 2001, p. 180.

<sup>79</sup> "US Delegation Suggests Rethink of Turkey's \$5 Billion Military Debt", *Turkish Daily News*, 2 October 2001.

supporters of this view, and during his correspondence with President Bush he underlined that a military operation in Afghanistan should include the toppling of the Taliban regime.<sup>80</sup> He went on to say that the model to be introduced had to be one similar to Turkey's secular democratic model to ensure peace, stability and tranquillity in Afghanistan. At times the discussions became emotional. The deep historical ties between the two countries have been continuously repeated to underline the 'necessity' of Turkey's support for the Afghan people: Afghanistan was the first country to recognise the new Turkish Republic; Turkey had helped Afghanistan in its modernisation efforts; Atatürk – the founding father of the modern Turkish Republic – had put special emphasis on Afghanistan, and so on.<sup>81</sup> Some proponents of a proactive Turkish foreign policy went on to suggest that "The first country to recognise Kemal Atatürk's revolution and adopt the Turkish model was Afghanistan in 1921. Under the right political reformulation, to which Turkey will undoubtedly contribute, Afghanistan could be the first model in the post-cold war period to rehabilitate itself through the methods and means provided in the historic Turkish national experiment."<sup>82</sup> Foreign Minister Cem, while acknowledging the universal validity of the Turkish model, called for caution as the Turkish model "is not one that could be forced upon from the outside. What kind of a model they want, what kind of a model they need, and what kind of a model they are ready for are [things] to be decided upon by the Afghan people themselves."<sup>83</sup>

From an American perspective, as discussed above, Turkey's support and participation in the coalition was useful to rebut allegations that the US was engaged in a war against Islam. Therefore, similar to Turkish arguments, there were extensive US references to Turkey constituting a model for Afghanistan as well.<sup>84</sup> Besides its military contributions, as previously noted, Turkey had important links in the country and the region, which could facilitate the US presence there. As for the peacekeeping phase, Turkey has a large standing army with accumulated experience in special operations and peacekeeping; thus, it could spare its troops for such a mission.<sup>85</sup>

Yet the heightened expectations regarding the region are difficult to substantiate.<sup>86</sup> First of all, Turkey's interests in Afghanistan are similar to the sudden discovery of Central Asia and the Caucasus after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Therefore, because of the lack of any previous strategic perspective towards the country and the region as a whole (except for those in the Atatürk era), raising expectations conjecturally is highly problematic. Secondly, as was discussed earlier, Turkey's potential for becoming a model to the Muslim world is highly limited. In the case of Afghanistan, this is further limited by the particular characteristics of this war-torn country: the people of the country are illiterate and very closed-off from the world; the society is very fragmented; and, its economy has collapsed. Since Western liberal

<sup>80</sup> Bila, Fikret (2001), "Ecevit'ten Bush'a: 'Taliban devrilmeli'", *Milliyet*, 26 September.

<sup>81</sup> See for example the Prime Minister's address at a party group, as reported in *Hürriyet*, 11 September 2001. For coverage of Foreign Minister Cem's visit to Kabul on 17 December 2001, in which he made extensive references to historical ties as a facilitating factor of cooperation, see Turkish daily newspapers from 18 December 2001.

<sup>82</sup> Wihbey, Paul M. and Sule Kilicarslan (2001), "A Turkish Strategic Window of Opportunity", *Insight Turkey* October-December, Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 21.

<sup>83</sup> "Cem: Turkish Model is Paradigm of Civilisation", interview of Ismail Cem by the *Turkish Daily News*, 7 January 2002.

<sup>84</sup> "Powell: Atatürk Afganistan Konusunda Hakliydi", *Hürriyet*, 6 December 2001.

<sup>85</sup> See Makovsky, op.cit., pp. 42-44.

<sup>86</sup> For a critical account, see Kardas, op.cit.; for a careful approach, see Erol, op.cit.

values are not welcomed by the people in relatively more developed Muslim countries, one may wonder how Turkey would be able to carry these values to Afghanistan?

With regard to military contributions and the assumption of the ISAF command, these actions will certainly give an important impetus to Turkey's role in the region and its international standing. Nevertheless, such actions are not backed by other economic and political incentives in the medium and long-term, and the practical benefits could be severely limited. Past experience of Turkey's earlier expectations regarding Central Asia, geographical distance and lack of means could further limit the transformation of this engagement into political influence. The effect of geographical distance and the global reach of the US should therefore be carefully evaluated. As the empirical evidence about Central Asia suggests, although Turkey sees itself as a bridge to open up these countries to the West, the West has in fact been able to establish direct contacts with these countries. In the military domain, during the preparation and conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom, the US was able similarly to gain the support of other regional powers, notably Pakistan, and thus minimised the role of Turkey in the overall operation.<sup>87</sup> Last but not least, the dynamism of US foreign policy in the new era and whether Turkey can keep pace with it, should be taken into consideration in evaluating the impact of the Afghanistan engagement on Turkish foreign policy (i.e. how many other such engagements Turkey can sustain?). Following this argument, any shift of international interest away from the Central Asian region, especially if one considers the US intentions to expand the war on terrorism, could also result in a situation where the novelty of the 'strategic importance of the region' may wear off. In such a situation, this out-of-area role could lose the wider political context in which it takes place and turn out to be another sporadic, short-term engagement.

### **A breakthrough in Turkish-EU relations?**

Another active area in Turkish foreign policy after the 11 September attacks is Turkish-European Union relations. The basic Turkish argument could be summarised as follows: because the events of 11 September have proven Turkey's value, not only to the Americans but also to the Europeans, Turkey should now anticipate a warmer West.<sup>88</sup> Turkey therefore tried to utilise this opportunity to cement its relations with both the US and Europe, by emphasising its role as a significant pro-Western power at such a critical juncture. Furthermore, there was a strong Turkish belief that in the new era created by the events of 11 September, that because the concern for fighting international terrorism was going to be the major *leitmotiv*, the international system would be increasingly dominated by security-oriented considerations. Following this line of argument, the role of powerful security actors (such as the US and NATO) will be enhanced at the expense of less powerful ones (EU members and the CFSP). In this manner, the urgency of Turkey's relations with the EU on the CFSP and the ESDP was expected to diminish.<sup>89</sup> Besides the hope that Turkey's renewed

<sup>87</sup> There were even speculations that in the planning and conduct of the military campaign in Afghanistan, US central command could be situated in Turkey, yet they turned out to be unsubstantiated exaggerations of Turkey's role. Based on this prospect, some analysts had even gone so far as to argue that moving the central command to Turkey could revitalise Turkey's strategic importance and create a counter-balance against the growing influence of the EU/Germany in the eastern Mediterranean, in view of the accession of Cyprus into the EU (see the article "Prof. Osman Metin Öztürk'le Söylesi", 2023 No. 6, October 2001, pp 18-19).

<sup>88</sup> Bozkir, Volkan, Vice Secretary-General for European Union Affairs (2001), "Turkey Can Anticipate a Warmer West", *Turkish Daily News*, 3 October.

<sup>89</sup> For an assessment of the effects of the war in Afghanistan on the EU's CFSP and ESDP, see Kardas, Saban (2001), "Afganistan Operasyonu'nun AGSP'ye Olan Yansimalari", 25 November, retrieved from [http://www.liberal-dt.org.tr/guncel/Kardas/sk\\_afganistan.htm](http://www.liberal-dt.org.tr/guncel/Kardas/sk_afganistan.htm).

importance would boost Turkish-European relations, there was an additional impetus behind the Turks' viewpoint: in the context of the growing American-Turkish strategic partnership, the Turks felt confident that the US would not leave Ankara alone and would press the EU to satisfy Turkish demands. Therefore, according to Turkey, the EU should appreciate the Turkish position in some of the problems that have dominated Turkish-European relations for some time.

Turkish expectations that the EU and European countries would be more receptive to Turkey's position on fighting against terrorism have been already elaborated upon. Other issues that were supposedly going to be solved in a manner favourable to Turkey's interests included the Cyprus conflict, the deadlock on the ESDP and Turkey's troubled EU membership process. There were indeed some initial positive steps in all those areas that led to a sense of optimism.<sup>90</sup> There appeared to be a chance to overcome the squabble over the ESDP-NATO relations and over the place Turkey would have in the development of the ESDP. On the eve of the Laeken summit in December 2001, a consensus, called the 'Ankara Document' was reached between Turkey, the United Kingdom and the US. After a long pause, the dialogue between the leaders of the two communities on Cyprus resumed. Both of these achievements were viewed as a success by the Turkish politicians<sup>91</sup> and the US was said to have given stimulus to these developments.<sup>92</sup>

At the risk of simplifying the situation, we suggest that there are some fundamental challenges to Turkey's arguments that limit a sudden breakthrough in Turkish-EU relations. The main weakness of the Turkish discourse could be identified as follows. The initial rhetoric seemed to have perceived the West as a monolithic bloc.<sup>93</sup> Although this seemed to be true in the immediate aftermath of the 11 September terror attacks, when all the European powers expressed their solidarity with the US against the dangers of terrorism, after the novelty of these slogans faded away the underlying divergences in transatlantic relations over a wide range of issues resurfaced. This was exacerbated by another feature of Turkey's approach to the EU, in which it relied on US pressure in its dealings with the EU. These developments slowly put Turkey in an awkward position.

First of all, because EU-US relations were increasingly characterised by disagreements over several issues and transatlantic relations were more occupied with how to find a solution to these problems than relations with Turkey, thus the urgency of Turkey's problems for the US was far away from meeting the Turks' expectations.<sup>94</sup> Even if one assumes that the US would be inclined to support Turkey, it would approach Turkish-EU relations from a strategic perspective. The US approach may not be compatible with the actual realities of Turkey-EU relations and Turkey's expectations of the EU. This reasoning applies largely to EU democratisation and human rights priorities *vis-à-vis* Turkey – illustrated by the famous

<sup>90</sup> "Rays of Light: For the First Time in a Year, Turks are Seeing Some Flickers of Hope", *The Economist*, 15 December 2001, Vol. 361, No. 8252.

<sup>91</sup> "No Concessions on ESDP and Cyprus: Ecevit", 7 December 2001, retrieved from <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com.tr> (news portal).

<sup>92</sup> Colin Powell's visit to Ankara was the particular indicator of US support: "Powell to Push for Cyprus Settlement", *Turkish Daily News*, 3 December 2001; see also Kapsis, Jim (2001), "Beyond Geopolitics for Cyprus", *The Washington Times*, 5 December; for a Turkish view, see Candar, Cengiz (2001), "11 Eylül Jeopolitigi ve Kıbrıs'ta Son Tango", 6 December, retrieved from <http://www.haberturk.com> (news portal).

<sup>93</sup> See the quotation from Economy Minister Dervis in the above example.

<sup>94</sup> It suffices in this regard to remember that during a US-EU summit in May 2002, Turkey was barely on the agenda (see "EU-US Summit Starts Today: Turkey's EU Membership is not on the Agenda", *Turkish Daily News*, 3 May 2002).



analogy of a ‘democratic and stable Turkey versus a stable and democratic Turkey’. That could in turn lead to the next problem. Perhaps, this ‘tactic’ of using its relations with the US as a leverage *vis-à-vis* the EU is likely to cultivate a mood of distrust between Turkey and the EU, as well as friction between the EU and the US. Instead of creating a healthy dialogue with the EU, Turkey's use of its strategic ties with the US (and US lobbying as a stick against the EU) was increasingly perceived as a kind of low-intensity threat against Brussels. In the long term, Ankara itself hinders the creation of a strong channel of trust with the EU and is thus isolated. Against such a picture, it was no surprise that the Turkish elite soon began to question Turkey's membership in the EU. This was paralleled by another debate on whether Turkey should make a choice between EU membership and a strategic partnership with the US.<sup>95</sup>

The Turkish political elite's perception of the country as an indispensable actor to the West, particularly in the political and strategic realm, is a cause for further problems. It is true that Turkey's role in the European security architecture is vital, but the security-dominated basis of Turkey's perceptions of its relations with Europe impacts not only on the way Turkey values itself, but also on the actual course of developments. At times, this leads to robust attitudes towards the EU and demands for concessions or different treatment that hampers the integration process. More importantly, capitalising on its strategic importance diverts the attention away from Turkey's real problems and reduces the urgency to implement the economic, political and cultural reforms demanded by the European integration process. In other words, the more Turkey focuses on its indispensability to the West, the less it is willing to undertake the necessary transformation in its journey towards EU membership. Therefore, EU representatives have been quick to make their positions clear against Turkey's attempts to capitalise on its strategic importance and de-emphasise membership criteria. The EU commissioner responsible for enlargement, Gunter Verheugen, maintained that Turkey should meet the hard criteria to become a member of the EU; otherwise, the whole ‘Europe integration project’ will lose its credibility. He went on to say that a scenario where the EU “softens the conditions for Turkey's membership” in return for Turkey's “guarantee of strategic aid” was unacceptable: “We cannot make such a bargain.”<sup>96</sup> Given the initial expectations that, similar to Turkey's entry into NATO after it contributed troops to the Korean War, Turkey's participation in the military campaign in Afghanistan would pave the way for Turkey's membership into the EU, this warning is quite revealing.

Finally but importantly, given that the underlying roots of the problems that have dominated Turkish-EU relations are unlikely to suddenly disappear, even after 11 September caution is advisable. The continuation of the Greek veto on the Ankara Document, which in Turkey's view<sup>97</sup> resolved the tension over ESDP, and Turkey's futile attempts to force the EU to set a deadline for the start of membership negotiations are some of the examples. Therefore, a fundamental shift in the EU's policy towards Turkey just for the sake of Turkey's enhanced

<sup>95</sup> Secretary-General of the National Security Council, Tuncer Kilinc, shocked observers with his statement on 7 March 2002 and stimulated an intense discussion by maintaining that Turkey would never be accepted by the EU, hence it should seek alternative allies (see “Turkey Will Never be Accepted by the EU: Kilinc”, 7 March 2002, retrieved from <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com.tr> (news portal); see also Dagi, Ihsan (2002), “Kritik Karar: ABD ya da AB”, *Radikal*, 12 March; and Dagi, Ihsan (2002), “Competing Strategies for Turkey: Eurasianism or Europeanism?”, *Central Asia and Caucasus Analyst*, SAIS Biweekly Briefing, 8 May; also Birand, M. Ali (2002), “Will Turkey Choose the EU or the US?”, *Turkish Daily News, Opinion*, 19 April.

<sup>96</sup> “Türkiye’yi Kaybederiz”, *Milliyet*, 22 October 2001.

<sup>97</sup> “ESDI is completed from our point of view: Cem”, 13 December 2001, retrieved from <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com.tr> (news portal).

strategic importance is hard to expect. Rather, the determination to carry out transformation on the domestic scene and the speed with which Turkey delivers this change should continue to remain the single most important determining factor of Turkey's relations with the EU.

### **Turkish-American relations: Revival of the strategic partnership?**

This section reviews Turkish-American relations in further detail. As it has been underlined already in the American point of view, Turkey came to be seen as a critical country whose support and cooperation was essential. First of all, there was a strong belief in the US that supporting moderate Muslim countries that oppose terrorism and extremism was the key to winning the war on terrorism. The Turkish model, which embeds Islam within a secular system, appeared to be the best candidate to fit this role. In addition, Turkey's geographical location and experience in fighting terrorism made its cooperation essential to the international coalition against terrorism. Furthermore, Turkey was more than willing to contribute to the US agenda in Afghanistan by providing troops to the peacekeeping force. As a result, the Turkish-American relations that had been characterised by up-and-downs throughout the 1990s, started to receive renewed interest. As previously noted, many American politicians liked to call Turkey "a steadfast partner in [the] war on terrorism".<sup>98</sup> The changed mood was observed not only in the declarations of American politicians, but also in the titles of articles written on the issue, which were at times heavily emotional, such as "Turkey and the US: A Partnership Rediscovered".<sup>99</sup>

From Turkey's perspective, the revival of strategic relations with the US implied several potential advantages. Consequently, the Turks expected more active US assistance in a number of areas:

- support in the campaign against PKK terrorism;
- the promise of increased exports to American markets;
- the removal of obstacles to military transfers to Turkey;
- US backing of the Turkish command of Afghan peacekeepers and the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project;
- support for further IMF loans; and
- support for Turkey's foreign policy on issues such as Cyprus, the ESDP and EU membership.

Another repeated theme in the Turkish arguments was that (contrary to the Europeans), the US had always been more supportive and sensitive to Turkey's demands in most of the contentious issues, and thus a reliable partner. As a result, after the events of 11 September, the Turkish-American relations that were characterised as a 'strategic partnership' by President Bill Clinton in 1999 deepened further.<sup>100</sup> In this regard, Prime Minister Ecevit's

<sup>98</sup> US Department of State (2002), "Grossman: Change in the Value of Enduring Alliances", Remarks to the American Turkish Council by US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman, Washington, D.C., 19 March; see also "Turkey Called the 'Shining Crown Jewel' Amid Instability: US Team Hails Turkey for its Important Role", *Turkish Daily News*, 2 October 2001. The US Ambassador to Turkey also underlined that the US could have no better ally than Turkey in the war on terrorism, (see Pearson, Robert W. (2002), "The US and Turkey: A Model of Sustained Engagement", *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Winter-Spring, pp. 53-62); see also Pforzheimer, Annie (2002), "The US and Turkey: A Post-11 September Model of Sustained Engagement", *Polis Bilimleri Dergisi*, Vol. 4, No. 1-2, January-June, pp. 1-8.

<sup>99</sup> Cook, Steven A. (2001), "US-Turkey relations and the war on terrorism", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 3, No. 4, October-December, pp. 37-48.

<sup>100</sup> "Ismail Cem's New Year's Address", *Disisleri Güncesi*, January 2002.

visit to Washington from 14 to 19 January was a climax and provided an important occasion to cement the strategic partnership.<sup>101</sup>

In principle, it is hard to ignore that American-Turkish relations converge to a large extent. It was this convergence of interests and shared strategic vision that formed the basis of some common policies on various issues and regions, such as the Balkans and the Caucasus. Nevertheless, one should not underestimate the limitations that force us to take a more cautious stance. To begin with, growing references to Turkey's renewed strategic importance in the wake of the 11 September attacks inevitably reproduces the basic nature of Turkish-American relations, which has been heavily dominated by security issues. Because there are mutual security-related concerns on several issues and regions, this is understandable. But as in the past, this situation leaves Turkey dependent on shifting US priorities. Since it remains the passive receiver of the external conditions in this partnership, Turkey is deprived of the ability to direct this partnership according to its own agenda and priorities.

After 11 September, however, there were serious attempts to diversify the relationship and give it a more solid standing. Given that US foreign policy is going to be largely driven by an objective of 'security first' and some underlying problems in relations remain, it remains to be seen whether a major step towards diversification can be realised. Among others, the most attractive attempt towards diversification was the proposal to increase trade between Turkey and the US. The idea of increasing economic ties with the US is not new and has in fact been on the agenda since the Gulf war. To compensate Turkey's losses in the war, there was a discussion about how the US could help Turkey. The president of the country at that time, Mr. Turgut Ozal, pointed out that "We don't want direct financial aid, what we need is more trade with the US. For this, the US should abolish textile quotas and other barriers to trade." Yet once the war was over, Turkey's demands were forgotten and Turkey was left alone to deal with its economic problems.

Later, following Prime Minister Ecevit's visit to Washington in January 2002, the strengthening of Turkish-American trade and the economic dimension to the strategic partnership were once again on the agenda.<sup>102</sup> At a press conference in Washington, Mr. Ecevit said the outcome of his efforts deserved the highest praise: "Adding economic partnership to [the] political and military alliance with the US is an event that deserves ten marks."<sup>103</sup> Towards this end, a Turkish-American Economic Partnership Commission was established to handle all economic and trade related issues between Turkey and the US.<sup>104</sup> The Commission had its first meeting in Ankara in February.<sup>105</sup> Yet, the conclusions of these meetings fell short of Turkish expectations. Moreover, the plan to establish Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs) was also criticised as the US preferred a quick-fix solution and tried to incorporate Turkey into the existing QIZ between Israel and the US.<sup>106</sup> This small example

<sup>101</sup> "Ecevit's Washington Visit Highlights Turkey's Increased Value", *Turkish Daily News*, 15 January 2002; see also "Turkish-US Relations", *Newspot*, No. 31, January-February 2002; and *Disisleri Guncesi*, January 2002.

<sup>102</sup> "The Target is More Trade with America: Ecevit", 14 January 2002, retrieved from <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com.tr> (news portal).

<sup>103</sup> For this and other reactions, see Ünal Elif (2002), "PM Ecevit Earns High Marks with US Visit", *Turkish Probe*, 20 January, No. 470.

<sup>104</sup> "US Ready to Discuss Turkish Trade", *Associated Press*, 17 January 2002.

<sup>105</sup> "Turkish-US Commission Meets over Heavy Agenda", *Turkish Daily News*, 27 February 2002.

<sup>106</sup> "Türkiye, ABD-İsrail anlaşmasına katılacak", 27 February 2002, retrieved from <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com.tr> (news portal); see also "Hopes Dim after First Round of Turkey-US Economic Partnership Commission", *Turkish Probe*, No. 475, 3 March 2002. The Chairman of Turkish-US Business Council, Akin Öngör, was

is indicative of the fact that the administration of President Bush was not ready to take the painful step and go to Congress to seek legislation to establish closer, direct economic relations with Turkey owing to Congressional opposition. Therefore, in assessing Turkish-American relations, it should be noted that US foreign policies can shift easily through the different factors that affect US policy-making, such as lobbying, Congress and internal American debates. At the moment, there are many supporters of Turkey in the President Bush's administration, but this cannot be taken for granted and there is still strong opposition within Congress against Turkey.<sup>107</sup> The expectation of full, unqualified US support for all the issues mentioned above is therefore overly optimistic, as proved by the developments so far.

Despite the convergence of priorities at a strategic level, there may be divergence at the practical level. In addressing certain tangible issues, the approaches may not always be agreeable and even when these overlap, one should not overlook a fundamental characteristic of this relationship: the concerns of Turkey and the US are guided by entirely different sets of foreign policy priorities – a global hegemony versus a regional power. Therefore, there may always be diverging, even conflicting, interests and priorities on certain issues. Over-activism as observed in the current US foreign policy in the new era is likely to amplify this problem.

Although terrorism may be a common concern to both Europe and America as noted previously, there is a difference of opinion as to how to deal with it. A similar reasoning applies to Turkish-American relations. Turks repeatedly like to argue that the US war against terrorism is a policy parallel to that of Turkey's. As Turkish Ambassador to the US Osman Faruk Logoglu underlined, "We are at the forefront of the war, as a friend, as an ally and in reciprocation for the US understanding of our own fight against terrorism."<sup>108</sup> But in reality, it soon became clear that there are some fundamental differences. The controversy over the military operation against Iraq illustrates the perils of Turkey's geo-strategic position.

Turkey's geographical location is its main asset, but at the same time, it has also produced Turkey's greatest headache: Iraq. In an effort to root out the sources of international terrorism, the US shifted its focus to the so-called rogue states; President Bush took this one step further by declaring Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an axis of evil. Even before this speech, extending military operations against Iraq was on the US agenda. Following developments such as the supposed Iraq-al Qaeda links, the anthrax cases and the dispute over UN arms inspections in the country, Iraq became the next target for the US fight against terrorism. This inevitably brought Turkey to the forefront again, owing to its strategic value in any future war against Iraq.

Nevertheless, Turkey strongly opposed a war against Iraq. Before 11 September, the Turkish government had been trying to normalise relations with Iraq (despite US opposition) in order to compensate for economic losses that had resulted from the UN-imposed embargo on Iraq. Therefore, the US determination to intervene in Iraq was an unwelcome development. Yet, the real problem lies elsewhere. There is a fear that the operations against Iraq and the turmoil created by post-Saddam political developments may have serious repercussions for Turkish

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critical of the conclusions of the meeting, as noted in "ABD Türkiye'yi İhmal Ederse Uyuyamaz", *Hürriyet*, 17 March 2002; see also "US Leaves out Several Sectors from Turkish QIZs", *Turkish Daily News*, 27 June 2002.

<sup>107</sup> Although there was optimism that most of the Congressional opposition to Turkey would diminish, on certain issues it did in fact persist, as noted in "İnan: Armenian Lobby has no Chance against Turkey", *Turkish Daily News*, 8 May 2002; for a comparable view, see "Obstacle From the Greek Lobby to Helicopter Purchase", *Turkish Daily News*, 12 June 2002.

<sup>108</sup> "Turkish Ambassador to US Speaks at Fletcher", 14 March 2002, retrieved from <http://www.tacsne.org/Past%20Activities/Fletcherhaber.htm>.

security. Turkey is worried that the war against Iraq could result in the break up of Iraq and the establishment of a Kurdish state in the north. Such a possibility would, from the Turkish perspective, encourage Kurdish separatist elements within Turkey. For this reason, Turkey's main priority has been to avoid an operation against Iraq. When war became inevitable, Turkey argued that Iraq should remain one nation. The nightmare is that the Turkish army could be forced to occupy Northern Iraq to prevent the emergence of an independent Kurdish state there, which would affect the post-Saddam political developments in Iraq. Such a policy may not be compatible with the US agenda in Iraq and Turkish-American interests could move towards sharpened divergence.

Indeed, some Turkish analysts have persuasively argued that managing divergence and reaching a common position on the Iraqi issue could be the 'test case' for Turkish-American partnership. Reporting on the optimism following Prime Minister Ecevit's Washington visit, Cengiz Candar is blatantly critical: "Turkey's protection by America on 'political and economic platforms' depends to a large extent [on] Turkey's ability to act in tune with America on the issue of Iraq. I mean, as Turkey, you would oppose an American operation in Iraq; but at the same time you would become a 'strategic partner' with the US, and you would rely on US 'economic assistance' to Turkey unreservedly. That will not happen... Cannot happen... Saddam is the 'gist' of the calculations on Turkish-American relations and 'strategic partnership'..."<sup>109</sup> Moreover, everything comes with a certain price. It is noted that the deepening of the strategic partnership and the generous support Turkey receives from the US administration ironically intensifies Turkey's dependence on the US, with the effect that the burden of being a 'strategic ally' limits Turkey's room for manoeuvre.<sup>110</sup> Given the obvious difference of position towards Iraq, however, that situation only adds to the complexity of Turkey's uncomfortable partnership with the US.

Finally but importantly, one should also bear in mind that Turkey's willingness to engage in active policies on several fronts simultaneously is likely to lead to conflicts of priorities and resources. Its wish to enhance relations with Europe, while moving towards a deepened 'strategic partnership' with the US and engaging in a proactive policy in Eurasia, could be increasingly difficult to reconcile. Perhaps, as was discussed in the previous section, the debate over whether to choose between membership in the EU and strategic partnership with the US was just an early indicator of the dilemmas of a 'multidimensional' foreign policy.

### **An end to the cycle of economic crises?**

In this section we consider the impact of post-11 September developments on Turkey's domestic economic problems. Since early 2001, Turkey has been hit by a severe economic crisis. The crisis devastated the industrial sector, lowered living standards, raised unemployment and jeopardised Turkey's international financial solvency.<sup>111</sup> In dealing with the crisis, Turkey received a significant amount of IMF credits that have amounted to more than \$30 billion. American support was crucial for Turkey to obtain this IMF aid. Because Turkey emerged as a critical ally and the 'best model' for Islamic countries in the new era (from an American perspective), Turkey had to be supported economically. In this way the US could not only assure Turkey's cooperation but also send a strong message that it would

<sup>109</sup> Candar, Cengiz (2002), "'Stratejik' degil 'aday ortak'...", *Yeni Safak*, 22 January.

<sup>110</sup> Balci, Kemal (2002), "US Ties Turkish Government's Hands", *Turkish Probe*, 20 January, No. 470.

<sup>111</sup> "Kriz, OECD liginde küme düsürdü", 19 May 2002, retrieved from <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com.tr> (news portal); see also Aliriza, Bülent (2001), "Turkey and the Global Storm", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 3, No. 4, October-December, p. 25.

not abandon a US ally and Muslim country when it is in need. The remarks by US Congressman Robert Wexler, are quite telling: “An economic collapse in Turkey would be disastrous for America...America has got to treat the economy of Turkey as if it is the economy of New Jersey.”<sup>112</sup>

Although the Turkish side repeatedly claims that the IMF credits were provided to Turkey without any political concessions, there is a perception (both at home and abroad) that without the war in Afghanistan and the Turkish support in the campaign against terrorism, the IMF would have never given such a huge amount of money to Turkey. According to some comparative analogies, Turkey could have had a catastrophe similar to what happened in Argentina.<sup>113</sup> As quoted above, Turkish Economic Minister Dervis, who took over the Turkish economy in March 2001 and Prime Minister Ecevit have made strong link between Turkey’s support for the international fight against terrorism and the economic assistance offered to Turkey.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, representatives of the Turkish private sector were more than willing to agree with this point on strategic grounds. According to the Chairman of the Turkish-US Business Council, Akin Öngör, if Americans ignore Turkey and fail to support it economically, they would not be able to go to bed in safety.<sup>115</sup>

Whatever the exact motives behind the IMF decisions may have been, the fact is that with IMF help Turkey was able to control the economy in the short term and avert a catastrophe. Yet, in the long term this situation may have some negative consequences. As long as the economic and political system remains decayed and structural problems are not remedied, the injection of foreign capital into the economy is bound to have a short-term effect. There is growing speculation by financial analysts that Turkey's total debts, which now exceed its gross national product, may create serious problems in servicing and repayment.<sup>116</sup>

When assessing the performance of an economy and the issue of foreign assistance, perhaps the amount of foreign investment flowing into a country is more important than the amount of direct aid it receives. In this respect, Turkey does not have a promising picture. According to a recent report prepared by the UN Conference on Trade and Development, between 1998 and 2000 Turkey ranked 122nd among 137 countries in terms of foreign capital inflow.<sup>117</sup> The reasons why foreign investors did not prefer Turkey were mainly its macroeconomic instability, widespread corruption and the complex nature of the transactions that needed to be fulfilled. As a result, Turkey later decided to take steps to overhaul its foreign investment rules, as part of its IMF-backed reform process.<sup>118</sup> Another study reveals the other side of the coin: The amount of Turkish capital that is invested abroad, especially in Switzerland and Luxembourg, is estimated to be \$70 billion. Most of this money left Turkey after the

<sup>112</sup> “Congressman Wexler: US Must Throw all Support behind Turkey”, *Turkish Daily News*, 21 February 2002.

<sup>113</sup> For more on this famous comparison, see two contributions to the *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 2002: Akyürek, Cem, “Argentina’s Experience: Any Lessons for Turkey?”, and Kumcuoglu, Ümit, “Turkey vs. Argentina: A Comparative Analysis with a Long-term Perspective”; see also Ücer, Murat (2001), “When You Cry for Argentina, Should You Cry for Turkey too?”, *Private View*, Summer, No. 1, pp. 56-59.

<sup>114</sup> Indeed, although Dervis’ negotiations with the IMF at the end of September 2001 did not bear fruit, by mid-November the IMF announced the release of a further \$11 billion in loans. In the meantime, Dervis visited Vice-President Dick Cheney to bring his directly to the US. It seems that subsequent US influence paid off (see Aliriza, op.cit., p. 33).

<sup>115</sup> “ABD Türkiye’yi Ihmal Ederse Uyuyamaz”, *Hürriyet*, 17 March 2002.

<sup>116</sup> Aliriza, op.cit., p. 33.

<sup>117</sup> “Yabancı Hala Inat Ediyor”, *Radikal*, 29 April 2002.

<sup>118</sup> “Turkey Overhauling Foreign Investment Procedures”, *Turkish Probe*, No. 487, 26 May 2002.

economic crises for the purpose of securing the money abroad, since domestic investors no longer have the confidence to rely upon the Turkish economy.<sup>119</sup>

Here is the real paradox of Turkey: with a new crisis in the region, Turks think that the country has become strategically important. Yet, in political and economical terms it is considered to be a ‘risky’ place to invest, because its economic system is not stable and possible conflicts in the region pose threats to the country. If everyone had been convinced that an operation against Iraq was inevitable, and if the deputy prime minister of the country maintained that the operation could destabilise the whole region, then one wonders how international and domestic investors would be convinced that it is reasonable to invest in Turkey.

Moreover, the belief that ‘they cannot ignore us – they have to help us economically and financially, because we are strategically important!’ is not a good one. First of all, this mood could hinder domestic determination and the ability to solve the country’s problems on its own. Further, this could result in a less serious approach to economic reforms and in turn, diminish the self-discipline and self-control necessary for economic transformation. Therefore, how Turkey will be able to solve the vicious cycle of economic crises remains an open question.

These economic problems limit the country’s ability to act independently in its foreign policy, as was observed in discussions about the operation against Iraq. In a recent television broadcast by the American Fox-News channel, Dick Morris, the advisor to former President Clinton claimed that “Turkey has to support us, because the owner of Turkey is the IMF, and the IMF has already paid Turkey for this service,” generating severe annoyance among many Turks and at least one American analyst.<sup>120</sup> This ‘dependency’ applies to other cases as well. Many American analysts did not hesitate to refer to American support for further IMF aid to Turkey and argued for the relevance of the ‘dependent alliance’ between Turkey and the US. For instance, Daniel Nelson argues that, “Turkey needs America and the US needs Turkey. Aside from a Republican administration in Washington, Turkey hears only criticism of its human rights record, and sees ongoing exclusion from Europe. Without Washington, \$10 billion in further IMF loans would have been impossible, and the image of an Argentina catastrophe would loom. Without Washington, Athens’ place in the EU would mean intensified pressures to back away from the Turkish Republic on Cyprus. America has been a better friend [to Turkey] than any alternative.”<sup>121</sup>

On the other hand, there is a fundamental contradiction in the interplay between economics and strategic importance in the new era. The increasing strategic importance and the requirements of the new activism stemming from it, in fact, do not coincide with the Turkish economy’s needs and priorities. Whereas Turkey is undergoing a severe economic crisis and experiencing shortage of capital, the new engagements as part of a Turkish contribution to the international fight against terrorism are no doubt costly and require a solid economic backing. For instance, although Turkey was more than willing to contribute actively and assume the command of the ISAF in Afghanistan, the financial burden of this operation delayed the negotiations.<sup>122</sup> For a long time, Ankara’s worries about the financial repercussions of Turkish

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<sup>119</sup> “Türkiye’nin 70 Milyar Dolari Disarda”, 15 November 2001, retrieved from <http://www.haberturk.com> (news portal).

<sup>120</sup> “ABD’li yorumcu: IMF Türkiye’yi satın aldı”, 2 April 2002, retrieved from <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com.tr> (news portal).

<sup>121</sup> Nelson, Daniel N. (2002), “The Dependent Alliance”, *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 4, No. 1, January-March, p. 62.

<sup>122</sup> “Turkey Wants Assurances before Taking ISAF Command”, *Turkish Daily News*, 27 February 2002.

contributions could not be addressed by the US or the UK. Turkey's repeated demands for western funding of the ISAF fell on deaf ears for a long time. It was reported that Washington was reluctant to provide extra financial support for Ankara on ISAF because billions of dollars in IMF loans had already been provided to Turkey to help its recovery from the financial crisis.<sup>123</sup> There were even some speculations that Turkey might have given up its quest for ISAF leadership, based on financial and other considerations.<sup>124</sup> After prolonged discussions, in the end it was only through American assurances that Turkey was able to accept leadership of the force.<sup>125</sup> Similarly, because Turkey is keen on power projection beyond its borders to sustain its military engagements abroad, there is a willingness to spend further on military procurement in the aftermath of 11 September. For example, one of the biggest Turkish defence projects came to realisation with Turkey successfully concluding negotiations for the purchase of four AWACS (early warning aircraft) from Boeing. The financial cost of that project to Turkey is expected to be around \$1.1 billion.<sup>126</sup> One has to wait and see how it will be possible to reconcile the strategic calculations that require heavy military spending with the current needs of the Turkish economy.

Before concluding this section, it must be underlined that the interplay between the Turkey's economy and its strategic importance is problematic in other aspects. Turkey's overemphasis on its geo-strategic position and its value to the West, and its determination to transform this into tangible economic benefits may have worked at the time of crises. Nevertheless, it should be noted that such a policy could also turn out to be self-defeating in the long term. One cannot take the geo-strategic value granted; it may change over time and depend on the situation under consideration. Therefore, if Turkey is serious in solving its economic problems, it has to focus on structural remedies, rather than conjectural, external developments. More importantly, using its political-military contributions to Western security to gain economic leverage may diminish the trust between Turkey and its allies, adversely affecting the relations in the long term.

## Conclusion

In light of the activities observed so far, the dominant view is that the post-11 September events have contributed to Turkey's strategic importance, and thus have helped to reshape Turkey's relations with the US and Europe, as well as relations with neighbouring countries. As expressed by Foreign Minister Cem, "The unfortunate events of 11 September 2001 and ensuing developments have confirmed and consolidated some fundamental preferences of the Turkish foreign policy. Besides, they have boosted Turkey's strategic importance."<sup>127</sup> According to these arguments it may even stimulate the long-delayed redefinition of Turkey's role in the post-cold war world. An excellent example of these arguments is noted in Wihbey and Kilicarslan (2001): "What is required in the current circumstance is for Turkey to seize the strategic initiative, with bold political leadership that articulates Turkey's national security

<sup>123</sup> Ünal, Elif (2002), "Playing 'World Power' Role May Cost Turkey", *Turkish Daily News*, 3 March.

<sup>124</sup> "Türkiye ISAF Liderliginden Vazgeçebilir", 11 March 2002, retrieved from <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com.tr> (news portal).

<sup>125</sup> "Türkiye'nin ISAF Faturasini ABD Ödeyecek", *Hürriyet*, 18 March 2002; see also "Turkey to Take over Afghan Mission", *Associated Press*, 29 April 2002. The US aid was delayed, however, due the need for Congressional approval, "Turkish Troops in Afghanistan, US Aid is Delayed", *Turkish Daily News*, 12 June 2002.

<sup>126</sup> "AWACS Negotiations Complete", *Turkish Daily News*, 5 June 2002.

<sup>127</sup> "Cem: Turkish Model is Paradigm of Civilisation", interview of Ismail Cem by the *Turkish Daily News*, 7 January 2002.



aspirations within the new regional context. An historic window of opportunity exists for Turks, with Western support and encouragement, to emerge from their bunker-mentality and assert themselves in shaping a positive historical trend outside their borders...Turkey is ready...What remains is for the West, and specifically the US, to help Turkey mobilize its potential.”<sup>128</sup>

Although it is generally true that Turkey’s international standing has been visibly enhanced, a more cautious approach is needed to assess the post-11 September developments on Turkish foreign policy. This paper argues that the best way to view the Turkish role is in the context of a regional power. Turks have ambitious and at times, over exaggerated expectations of their country’s international position; but in reality, Turkey is mainly acting as a pivotal power. This can be best observed in the discussions regarding the Turkish role in Afghanistan and Turkey’s relations with Central Asia and the Caucuses. For example, on the one hand Turkey is trying to lead the ISAF, but on the other hand, it is asking the US to pay its financial expenses and provide Turkey with the necessary transport, intelligence and logistic facilities. This is exactly the kind of dilemma that the country faces as a pivotal state. The dilemma highlights the mismatch between Turkey’s capabilities and its foreign policy vision. It has to be recognised that, as things currently stand, the gap between Turkey’s capabilities and its expectations is difficult to bridge in the short run.

As a result, Turkey’s ability to be an independent actor, initiating its own projects is severely limited by, or depends upon, the degree to which it is successful in balancing its own priorities with external factors. In other words, Turkey could act in cooperation with other global and regional powers, and mobilise their support in areas of converging interests. In this way, Turkey can both advance its own interests and contribute to the agenda of its partners. But the extent to which Turkey’s interests diverge from those of its partners may make it increasingly difficult to follow an independent course of action. If this approach is chosen, any growing divergences may run the risk of becoming confrontations. This point (which many advocates of Turkey’s strategic importance fail to see) must be the basis of any assessment of Turkish foreign policy. Therefore, Turkey needs to seriously engage in a comprehensive and in-depth debate about its role in the world and in the region, the resources at its disposal, the foreign policy it envisages and its priorities. The responses to these questions are of vital importance for the successful resolution of not only the foreign policy issues faced by the country but its domestic problems as well. Such a debate should leave aside the influence of short-term, conjectural developments and focus more on setting long-term, structural priorities.

This segues into our next observation regarding the post-11 September debate on Turkey’s strategic importance. The arguments raised for Turkey’s enhanced strategic importance are very similar to those employed at the beginning of the 1990s, following the Gulf War and the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Yet remembering that the euphoria of the 1990s remained largely unrealised and diverted the country’s attention away from more important policy objectives, there is a valid argument that it is high time for Turkey to see the facts in a more realistic manner. First of all, the foreign policy issues that are on Turkey’s agenda will evolve according to the actual realities of the issue under consideration, rather than altered strategic conditions. It is true that the increased strategic value of the country may have positive effects on its international standing, but on contentious issues such as relations with Europe or America, the underlying sources of cooperation or divergence will not vanish.

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<sup>128</sup>Wihbey and Kilicarslan, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

Therefore it would be wrong for Turkey to capitalise on its strategic importance and downplay the necessary steps it needs to take in its foreign and security policies.

Secondly, the need for a more realistic vision in Turkish foreign policy has domestic implications. Whatever model it follows in its foreign policy or priorities it sets – including EU membership, leadership in Eurasia or strategic partnership with the US – Turkey’s international performance will depend above all its ability to solve problems internally, and reach economic and political harmony. In this regard, a rational assessment of the country’s international role would help to avoid unnecessary external adventures and enable Turkey to direct its attention to necessary domestic transformation. The economic, political and diplomatic problems facing the country are fundamental; they cannot be solved through a simple redefinition of Turkey’s strategic role in the new conjuncture. Engaging in ambitious external projects or relying on the tempting idea of Turkey’s indispensability to its Western partners could diminish the urgency for reform and take the focus of the country away from economic and political modernisation. Economic reforms, democratisation and human rights issues would receive less attention compared with the life-and-death problems of national sovereignty and national security.

Therefore a choice is being forced upon Turkey. It can aspire to become a so-called ‘stable’ regional or pivotal power willing to project power beyond its borders and thus maintain the current political culture (which is dominated by military and security considerations). Alternatively, it can choose to become an ordinary, but ‘democratic’ and self-sufficient state, by focusing on the necessary economic and political changes needed to reform its system.

The latter choice is definitely not an easy task. Although Turkey’s geographical location offers many advantages, its location is also a source of problems for the country. Whether one likes it or not, this volatile region is characterised by several potential and actual crises. For instance, two of the states that belong to the so-called ‘axis of evil’ are Turkey’s neighbours. Any development in the surrounding regions forces Turkey to become involved in one way or another. This is the reality that overarches life in Turkey. Although Turkey cannot escape this reality, it can choose to act in a rational manner with a long-term perspective, based on carefully elaborated priorities, instead of propaganda, conjectural calculations or short-term gains.

# About the European Security Forum

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The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) joined forces late in the year 2000, to launch a new forum on European security policy in Brussels. The objective of this *European Security Forum* is to bring together senior officials and experts from EU and Euro-Atlantic Partnership countries, including the United States and Russia, to discuss security issues of strategic importance to Europe. The Forum is jointly directed by CEPS and the IISS and is hosted by CEPS in Brussels.

The Forum brings together a select group of personalities from the Brussels institutions (EU, NATO and diplomatic missions), national governments, parliaments, business, media and independent experts. The informal and confidential character of the Forum enables participants to exchange ideas freely.

The aim of the initiative is to think ahead about the strategic security agenda for Europe, treating both its European and transatlantic implications. The topics to be addressed are selected from an open list that includes crisis management, defence capabilities, security concepts, defence industries and institutional developments (including enlargement) of the EU and NATO.

The Forum has about 60 members, who are invited to all meetings and receive current information on the activities of the Forum. This group meets every other month in a closed session to discuss a pre-arranged topic under Chatham House rules. The Forum meetings are presided over by François Heisbourg, Chairman of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. As a general rule, three short issue papers are commissioned from independent experts for each session presenting EU, US and Russian viewpoints on the topic.

**The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)** is an independent policy research institute founded in Brussels in 1983, with the aim of producing sound policy research leading to constructive solutions to the challenges facing Europe.

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