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From Eastern Europe to Western China

The Growing Role of Turkey in the World and Its Implications for Western Interests

Graham E. Fuller

Project AIR FORCE
Arroyo Center

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PREFACE

This report is the last in a series of regional studies on the new geopolitical orientation of Turkey. Taken together, the studies were an effort to map out the range of new geopolitical issues and interests involving Turkey and its periphery as they emerge today—in categories and regions that we are still unaccustomed to thinking about. This report summarizes many of the broad findings of the regional studies but reviews them particularly from the point of view of Western and American interests. Because this document is in many ways a summary itself, it does not contain its own summary.

Previous reports in the series include:

- Graham E. Fuller: *Turkey Faces East: New Orientations Toward the Middle East and the Old Soviet Union,* R-4232-AF/A;
- Ian O. Lesser: *Bridge or Barrier? Turkey and the West After the Cold War,* R-4204-AF/A;
- Paul Henze: *Turkey: Toward the Twenty-First Century,* N-3558-AF/A.

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George Donohue is Vice President and Director, Project AIR FORCE. Those interested in further information on Project AIR FORCE should contact his office directly at RAND.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Here at the end of the twentieth century, quite unexpectedly, the world is being sharply buffeted by geopolitical change unparalleled in scope at any time since World War I. The collapse of communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union have not only spawned fifteen new states in the world, but have brought the global Cold War to an end, unleashing waves of nationalism and separatism in many other states, of which Yugoslavia is only the most dramatic example. These regional events have generated massive ripple effects elsewhere in the world among a large number of noncommunist states; the process of fracture and disintegration of the basic concept of the nation-state is perhaps only beginning.

Turkey has been among those states most immediately affected by the changing environment in the region around it. Located in geopolitical terms for so many decades in the southeastern corner of Europe, today Turkey lies at the center of a rapidly evolving new geopolitical region of Turkish peoples[1] from Eastern Europe to Western China—a region in which it will be the central player. These geopolitical shifts, combined with Turkey's new prominence in international events, will have major impact on the way Turkey sees itself, deals with others, and is perceived by others.

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[1]This report distinguishes between "Turkish" (pertaining to Turkey) and "Turkic" (the generic term for all Turkic peoples wherever they live), as does Russian (*turyetski* and *tyurkski* respectively). It is important to note that the Turkic languages themselves do not so distinguish: *Turk* is the adjective and noun used for all Turkic peoples.

The emergence of a whole new "Turkic world"—similar to the Arab world in size and distance spanned—has come as a surprise to much of the world, specialists excepted. A huge Turkic belt has now revealed itself, stretching from the Balkans across Turkey, Iran, and Central Asia, up into the Russian heartland of Tatarstan and into western Siberia, deep into western China and to the borders of Mongolia, comprising in all some 150 million people. The concept of a shared sense of Turkishness is widespread among nearly all of them.[2]

The degree of political cohesion that will emerge from these close cultural and ethnic ties may well be limited. But the existence of a new Turkic belt has to be a major element in geopolitical thinking about Asia from now on—perhaps comparable to the special relationships that exist among the Arab states. The degree of distinctiveness among the Central Asian states, while a political reality, will always be viewed by intellectuals of the region as somewhat artificial and perhaps susceptible to political union sometime in the future.

If one can generalize at all about the historical experience of ethnic groups, one observation is that the Turkic peoples, coming from nomadic origins, have traditionally been a "martial" people who almost invariably dominated wherever they moved, variously controlling large parts of China, Mongolia, Central Asia, Russia, Iran, and Anatolia as they migrated in various groups from East to West over a period of some 1500 years. The Turks have honed the skills of empire for long centuries and are accustomed to the practice of rule, state-

[2]The average Turk is impressed by the vast similarities of his languages across Asia, even when many of the differing Turkic tongues are not fully mutually intelligible. In linguistic terms, most of the languages differ no more than Italian from Spanish, or Russian from Ukrainian. For example, a Turk from Istanbul can communicate with an Uzbek in basic terms within a few hours and, with study, can read and understand Uzbek almost fully within a month. Azerbaijani or Turkmen is almost fully comprehensible to an Istanbul Turk within a few days of "adjusting the ear" and noting the use of words unique to the new language/dialect. On the other hand, for serious discussions, Turks in Central Asia and Central Asians in Turkey require an interpreter for full and correct understanding. Cultural differences between the Turks of Turkey and those of Central Asia are more profound, given the 75 years of communist culture that has separated them. Unfortunately, there is no established Turkic lingua franca among all Turkic peoples, although the Turkish of Turkey aspires to that role; Turkey is shrewdly assisting in providing communication and media services to Central Asia that would help disseminate a knowledge of Turkish among the broad population there.

craft, and geopolitics. This long experience has given them a certain "gravity" of conduct, a distinct self-confidence in comparison to many other Middle Eastern peoples such as the Persians and Arabs, who indeed developed rich and sophisticated urban civilizations but nonetheless remained under the control of other peoples for long periods of their history. This experience as the dominated, rather than the dominant, often lends the political culture of those societies greater wariness and suspicions about outside manipulators. While these generalizations must be taken with extreme caution, they do suggest that the newly liberated Turkic peoples could become a significant political force in the heart of Asia, eventually looking towards ethnically based state-building. Their traditions of power suggest they may be less inclined toward radicalism and will have less historical basis for nurturing anti-Western inclinations.

Chapter Two

HOW DOES TURKEY MATTER TO THE UNITED STATES?

In what ways does Turkey matter to the United States in a sharply changing world? The question is less easy to answer today, when U.S. interests are in a state of major flux with the end of the Cold War. The Cold War often lent many far-flung countries major—if transitory—geopolitical significance resulting from their role in Western competition with the Soviet Union: such diverse states as Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua took on special weight in U.S. calculations precisely because of Soviet or pro-Soviet activities there. Turkey itself has historically derived its particular importance to the West from its strategic location on the southern flank of the Soviet Union, its guardianship of the Bosporus and Dardanelles straits controlling access to the communist-dominated Black Sea, and its explicit, early commitment to the Western security cause demonstrated as far back as the Korean War, to which Turkey contributed combat troops. Thus geopolitics and a pro-Western orientation rapidly won Turkey a prominent role within NATO.

TURKEY'S NEW IMPORTANCE

Today that role has shifted drastically. Even though the end of the Cold War sharply diminishes the place of NATO, Turkey's growing importance is much more powerfully defined by its centrality to regions of major instability and conflagration—in which the long-range policies of Turkey could undergo significant and unprecedented change. The policies adopted by Turkey will have great impact on many key problems, where Turkey could serve either as a

stabilizing force, or as a complicating and exacerbating factor, in accordance with newly perceived national interests. This new centrality of Turkey over a huge geographical region, analyzed at length in the four regional studies in this project,[1] emerges vividly in the following significant areas.

The Balkans. Turkey may play a significant role in the seething Balkans, where old states are collapsing, new ones are being formed, new hostilities and new political alliances are emerging, and a large (nine million) Muslim population (especially in Bosnia, Albania, Macedonia, and Bulgaria) increasingly looks to Turkey as a potential ally in the unfolding struggle among new nationalist movements in the region. Major Turkish involvement would tend to place the Balkan confrontation along more starkly religious lines, reactivating the traditional Eastern Orthodox-Islam schism that so long dominated the region, poising Serbia, Greece, and potentially Bulgaria against Turkey. Some Russian nationalist circles have even expressed solidarity with this historical Orthodox grouping of nations.

The Aegean. The more assertive Turkish role in the Balkans, and Greece's increasing insecurities about the new Balkan politics, serve to increase Greek-Turkish frictions in the Aegean, now less constrained with the end of the East-West struggle. Aegean confrontation would present both Washington and Europe with a serious problem.

The Caucasus. Turkey has been drawn unavoidably into the volatile new politics of the Caucasus, where Armenia and Azerbaijan are locked in a seemingly unresolvable and potentially expandable war; where Georgian politics are highly unstable; and where other Muslim peoples agitate to break away from the new Russian federation. Turkey can, for example, act as regional power broker, offering its good offices to mediate in regional strife. Far less constructively, it can take sides by joining the Turkic Azeris against Armenia. An overt and permanent Azerbaijani-Turkish alliance against Armenia would

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[1]See Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey Faces East: New Orientations Toward the Middle East and the Old Soviet Union*, R-4232-AF/A, 1992; Ian Lesser, *Bridge or Barrier? Turkey and the West After the Cold War*, R-4204-AF/A, 1992; Paul Henze, *Turkey Toward the Twenty-First Century*, N-3558-AF/A, 1992; and unpublished work by James F. Brown, "Turkey in the Balkans: A Revived Presence."

tarnish Turkey's standing as a regional great power, damage its international status and influence, draw in Iran, and broaden the conflict substantially.

Syria. Potential new conflict can emerge with Syria over water rights; Syrian long-term support for the Kurdish separatist-terrorist organization (the Kurdish Workers Party or PKK) in Turkey is highly volatile. Conversely, improving Turkish ties with Syria could help lead the northeast Arab region into a period of dramatic new stability, especially if it were linked to progress on Arab-Israeli-Palestinian issues.

Iran. A new and ever deepening Turkish rivalry is emerging with Iran over influence in the new states of Central Asia and especially Azerbaijan. The independence of former Soviet Azerbaijan threatens to stimulate a parallel separatist movement in northern Iran (Iranian Azerbaijan) that could provoke Iran into a severe, high-stakes conflict with Turkey—even if Ankara does not seek to provoke it.

Iraq. Unprecedented new Turkish confrontation with Iraq has developed as a result of the Gulf War and Turkey's role as an active belligerent against Saddam Hussein. Turkey is deeply disturbed at Iraq's quest for weapons of mass destruction and will be a key country in limiting future Iraqi expansionism in the Gulf area.

The Kurdish Lands. The Gulf War and the emergence of an increasingly autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq has inexorably drawn Turkey into the increasingly complex and destabilizing aspects of Kurdish nationalist politics, affecting the territorial integrity of at least three states. The Kurdish problem threatens Turkey with a potential separatist movement that could draw it into conflict with Iran and Iraq as well, especially if these states seek to exploit or exacerbate Turkey's ethnic vulnerability—as they have already done.

Central Asia. Turkish involvement in the evolving politics of Central Asia can have major impact, especially where broader Turkic nationalism could play a growing regional role. While cultural pan-Turkism does not have to be a negative element in the development of these states (especially if it could serve to establish useful regional federal relationships), even limited moves toward Central Asian Turkic unity will exacerbate competing national feelings among Russians and Iranian peoples (Persians, Afghan Tajiks, Tajikistan's Tajiks). These same Central Asian ethnic movements are already reinforcing sepa-

ratist yearnings among the Turkish peoples of Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang province), and they could possibly unleash further separatist or breakaway movements in northern Afghanistan and even, in counterreaction, in Pakistan. Beijing has already reacted by dusting off certain irredentist claims of its own in Central Asia (although they enjoy no regional support).

Russia. If relations should deteriorate between the millions of expatriate Russians living in Central Asia and the native Turkic peoples, the confrontation is likely to intensify extreme nationalist feelings in Russia itself, strengthening less-moderate elements and leading to a more explicit "Christian-Muslim" confrontation in the region. Russia already feels vulnerable from the breakaway tendencies among the Tatars and other Turkic and Muslim peoples within its borders. Turkish association with these movements, however indirectly, will serve to resuscitate the grand old geopolitical and religious confrontation between Turkic and Russian peoples of several centuries ago—tsarist Orthodox Russia versus the Muslim Ottoman Empire. Resurgent extreme nationalism among Russians would work directly against moderate, pro-Western forces in Russia.

Europe. Turkey maintains an abiding interest in gaining full membership in the European Community (EC) and the Western European Union, a quest that is facing increasing problems from at least two sources: the emergence of independent states in Eastern Europe that themselves seek membership in EC, and the worry of several European states, especially Germany, that new activist Turkish policies in the East could indirectly embroil NATO and the EC in undesirable conflicts thousands of miles from Europe. Yet Turkish exclusion from what may be perceived as a "Christian club" in Europe could lead to resentment and some anti-Western feelings in Turkey itself.

Turkey's centrality to these issues has thus, quite unexpectedly, mushroomed overnight as a result of post–Cold War change, in which Ankara's views and policies are now of great importance to the region. Turkey is one of those countries that have grown in importance in the new world environment as formerly significant Cold War players have faded, especially the major Soviet client states. Consultation with Turkey on the issues that involve its interests and influence is thus essential to Western policymaking in the region. In

fact, Turkey's own national interests are perhaps more immediately and vitally affected in some of these areas of conflict than are Western interests themselves.

TURKEY AND ISLAM

Turkey is furthermore of major significance as the preeminent model of a secular Islamic state in the Middle East—a factor that takes on increasing prominence with the current intensification of Islamic politics in key Arab countries. Turkey was actually the first Muslim state in Islamic history to declare secularism as the basis of the state—as early as 1924. This decision, perhaps rather casually noted by the West at the time, now takes on far greater significance, given the place Islamic fundamentalism has so vividly assumed in the Western political lexicon and the search for credible secular Muslim models.

But the religioius issue is with us permanently: Islamic factors simply cannot be shut out of Middle Eastern politics. The difficulty lies in integrating Islam into politics without destabilizing the state. Although the Turkish historical experience differs in several ways from other Muslim states in the region, most states still share many of the problems of political Islam. Turkey, after a long ban on explicitly Islamic politics for decades, has for many years now allowed Islamic parties to compete in the political process; this experience has importantly demonstrated that the overall appeal of these groups at the ballot box is fairly consistently limited to no more than 15 percent of the population. (This moderate Turkish experience is less relevant in those countries where Islamic parties have burst forth onto the political scene following a period of severe political repression—such as in Egypt, Algeria, or former Soviet Central Asia—when they may have been one of the few coherent opposition movements capable of winning massive public support in initial free elections.) However, Turkey's experience with the evolution of a relationship between democracy and Islam is very important for the future of the whole Muslim world; it needs to be examined for its implications by Western policymakers as well.

Chapter Three

THE TURKISH DOMESTIC DEBATE

THE ATATURKIST LEGACY

Acceptance of a new role in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East has not come easily to Turkey, for it has required virtual abandonment of a revered and deeply rooted foreign policy legacy left in the years after World War I by the father and founder of the modern Turkish state, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. As the new republic rose from the ashes of the old multinational, multisectarian Ottoman Empire, Ataturk warned his countrymen to eschew all irredentist ambitions or foreign policy based on ethnic or religious ties, and to focus on the development and preservation of a new Turkish nation-state within its modern boundaries. Any kind of Pan-Turkish or neo-Ottoman interests or aspirations clearly could only lead to dangerous confrontation with nascent Soviet power or with Western imperial power that dominated most of the Middle East. Ataturk untiringly preached that Turkey must face West, align itself within European politics and culture, and abandon its historic ties with the Middle East. Since then, the Turkish elite has prided itself on being part of a broadly European culture and Western political orientation; even the Turkish man on the street views himself as far removed from the Arab or Persian world, for which he has little affection or kinship.

Ataturk's overall vision was of course sound at the time, and it was largely observed until the collapse of the Soviet Empire, with certain exceptions. Turkey rigorously avoided any interest in Soviet Central Asian affairs—to the extent that even academic study of the Turkic languages and history of that region was suspect and discouraged for

long decades—but it did begin to show growing interest in the welfare of other "overseas Turks" (*dis Turkler*), first in Cyprus, which actually led to military intervention and partition of the island, and then in Bulgaria. The 1970s oil boom in the Persian Gulf also led to increasing economic ties with the Arab world and a growing Turkish sensitivity to the policies of many Muslim states whose goodwill was seen as important to Turkey's economic interests. Growing trade with the Arab world, and the increased presence of Arab investment in Turkey, introduced a slightly more acceptable "Islamic orientation" in Turkish foreign policy; the fact that it was anchored in economic reality made the classic Ataturkist elite only slightly less uncomfortable with this modest new "Arab orientation." Increasingly open involvement of avowedly Islamic parties in Turkish politics in the 1970s and 1980s began to further fray the stricter interpretations of pure Ataturkist secularism.

The liberation of the Turkic republics of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new ethnic politics in the Balkans has brought about further revision of this standing legacy. Indeed, whether it wanted to or not, Turkey could not remain aloof to the emergence of the region's new Turkic states, especially as competition for influence there broke out among a number of other regional actors as well, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan.

NEW POLICY DEBATES

The new political developments of the former Soviet Union and the Middle East have therefore opened up painful debates within Turkish society about its future orientation. Most Turks, especially the traditional Ataturkist elite, still believe that Turkey's key interests are to be fulfilled primarily through contact with the West, of which they view themselves as a part. They fear that any new orientation by Ankara toward the Middle East and the Turkic world can only detract from the European character of Turkish society and weaken its very acceptance within the Western political system. Their arguments are strengthened by an observable EC concern, especially in Germany, that Turkey's new foreign policy involvements, starting with the Gulf War against Saddam Hussein, could end up involving the EC or NATO in security imbroglios far from traditional European interests.

Opponents of any new policies that stress pan-Turkish links also point out that the new states of Azerbaijan and Central Asia have little to offer to Turkey in economic terms. Those states are viewed as poor, deeply mired in an internal political struggle to weaken the hold of former Communist Party structures, and hindered by complex transitions to market economies with very limited economic incentives for Turkey. Turkey has only limited abilities to invest and even less money available for foreign assistance. These opponents argue that Turkey should not get drawn into potential political rivalries and struggles in a region that may be in turmoil for some time to come. While these arguments make rational sense, the force of regional nationalisms and rivalries will make it almost impossible for Turkey to remain aloof from developments. Turks will find it difficult to eschew a leadership role among the other Turkic states of the world. Turkey's own Islamic parties and groups also stress the need for closer ties with Turkey's Muslim neighbors and preach a cautious view toward the West, which they perceive as hostile to both Islam and Turkey.

This debate over foreign policy—really involving questions of degree rather than a stark choice between East and West—is a necessary and healthy one, perhaps the first serious debate over foreign policy since the founding of the republic. Turkey will inevitably have to reconsider its range of priorities now that new opportunities have opened up. From the Western point of view, however, perhaps the most negative turn of events would be a drift by a frustrated Turkey in the direction of more ethnically chauvinistic, adventuristic nationalism, transforming it into a far less moderate state in the region. Several scenarios could converge to produce this kind of negative effect:

- Turkey is spurned in its search for closer integration into Europe, the EC, and other European institutions.
- Spiralling violence between Armenia and Azerbaijan finally forces Turkey out of a neutral position and into full military support of Azerbaijan, angering Russia and bringing international pro-Armenian sympathizers into a strong anti-Turkish stance, especially in the United States and Europe.
- A Turkish alliance with Azerbaijan lends heightened support to the idea of a "united Azerbaijan" that would eventually tear away

the important province of Iranian Azerbaijan, plunging Turkey into direct confrontation with Iran.

- Economic conditions deteriorate in Turkey, bringing more radical policies into a government that might be inclined to blame the West for Turkey's economic hardships, especially if excluded from the EC and deprived of the military benefits of NATO membership.
- A clash with Greece leads Turkey to further estrangement from Europe, especially if Greece could gain European support.
- The position of Turkish workers (*Gastarbeiter*) in Germany leads to deterioration of Turko-German relations—already damaged by German tendencies toward sympathy for the position of the Kurdish minority in Turkey, and by potential rivalry for geopolitical position in the Balkans.
- Turkey is drawn into military conflict with Greece over the Turkish minority in Greek Thrace, and over Macedonia if the Yugoslav civil war sparks ethnic conflict there as well.
- Continuing deterioration of the Kurdish situation inside Turkey leads to growing civil unrest, violence, and a perception in the outside world of broad Turkish human-rights violations that lead to deterioration of its relations with Western states, including the United States. A widespread popular Turkish perception that the West had both sparked Kurdish nationalism with the Gulf War and then "turned against Turkey" could open the way to more extremist views, nationalist or Islamic.
- Increased Turkish nationalism additionally exacerbates the Kurdish situation, creating strong anti-Kurdish sentiment within Turkey and complicating the opportunity of Kurds to participate fully in the political life of Turkey.
- Islamic fundamentalism in Turkey, while historically often at odds with secular nationalism, joins the fray as a powerful quasi-nationalistic factor. Islamists would support Turkey in an anti-Western policy direction, and they would encourage deep suspicions of the West's policies and intentions, and reinforce any native trends towards xenophobia. Appeals made to Turkey by Balkan Muslims receive a powerful emotional response from both the Islamist and nationalist blocs.

If several or all of these conditions converged, Turkey's policies could lead to an embrace of more extreme Turkish nationalism/chauvinism in the country's foreign policy, with uncertain effect on the remaining Turkish states of the region.

Although many aspects of the scenarios above could actually come to pass, it is important to recognize that a chauvinist anti-Western Turkey does not represent the more likely course of events for the future. Turkish political common sense and balance over the years, combined with deeply rooted westernization among a Turkish upper and growing middle class should help maintain balance and proportion in policies and outlook. Turkey's foreign policy establishment is highly professional, experienced, and very Western-oriented. Turkey's very professional military has always sought to avoid foreign entanglements, but its tradition of sober leadership and policies could gradually be altered by a change of complexion in the civilian leadership of government that pursues a more blatantly pan-Turkist or interventionist foreign policy. Turkish economic interests overwhelmingly lie to the West rather than to the poorer Turkish world. Turkey is unlikely to want to divert significant economic resources to an Eastern policy if it will harm the state's overall economic foundations and social stability. But it is also important for the West to recognize that a disgruntled Turkey today has far greater negative implications for the region than ever in the past. If the region is in turmoil, Turkey is unlikely to sit idly by as other states are seen to intervene in areas of interest to Ankara.

THE KURDISH PROBLEM

The expanding character of the Kurdish problem in Turkey is deeply disturbing for Turkey, its allies, and the region. Although the Kurds made their distinctive ethnic feelings very clear during uprisings in southeastern Anatolia in 1925 and after, the Kurdish areas had been basically free of any major uprisings for long decades. The Turkish security presence there has kept order, but it has done nothing to address the grievances of the population against often harsh police methods, a desire for cultural and linguistic rights, and a greater share in the economic prosperity of Turkey. In the past decade, with the emergence of the PKK's ideologically driven, Marxist-Leninist

"national liberation movement," the level of armed confrontation has risen dramatically and—some might argue—decisively.

The Gulf War greatly exacerbated the Kurdish problem with the gross depredations of Saddam Hussein against the Kurdish people, the flood of over a million Kurdish refugees into Turkey from Iraq, the creation of a UN-protected Kurdish autonomous zone in northern Iraq, the holding of elections for an autonomous Kurdish government under Western protection in northern Iraq, the establishment in the fall of 1992 of a "federal" Kurdish state within Iraq, and the continuing moves of the Kurds towards de facto administrative autonomy and de facto "foreign relations" with Turkey. Not only has the plight of the Kurds risen dramatically before the world, but Turkish domestic policy has been making an unprecedented shift toward greater liberalism, the recognition of the existence of a Kurdish minority, and their right to use their language.

Although Turkey has now recognized officially that there can be no permanent military solution to the Kurdish problem in Turkey, and that development of the Kurdish regions must be the centerpiece of any effort to pacify the region, the PKK has also taken advantage of the new circumstances to step up armed struggle, carrying terrorism into the cities and against the civilian population in an effort to polarize the situation. These terrorist actions greatly complicate the government's ability to solve the problem through more enlightened economic and social policies. A major Turkish offensive in late 1992 against the PKK inside northern Iraq, with support from the Kurdish administration there, dealt a major blow to the PKK military infrastructure and guerrilla strength, but the problem of Kurdish unrest cannot ultimately be solved if the solution does not include the creation of alternative meaningful political vehicles for the expression of Kurdish grievances and aspirations within Turkey. Kurdish separatism within Turkey is hardly a foregone conclusion as of now, but a refusal to meet grievances will only strengthen the forces in that direction. Unfortunately, these events are not taking place in a vacuum, but in a world in which separatism is a growing phenomenon.

Sadly, there can be no guarantee that even liberal and enlightened policies in the Kurdish areas of Turkey will keep the Kurdish population from seeking autonomy. While most Kurds probably do not view the PKK as the ideal vehicle for their aspirations in Turkey, it is

the only "national" movement they have so far, and as such it enjoys at least the sympathy of a large number of Kurds who see it as a means of improving their situation in Turkey. In brief, liberalized policies may now be too late to stem a historical move toward self-determination by the Kurds in Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. While there is nothing inevitable about Kurdish separatism in Turkey, it cannot remain untouched by the far more advanced and rapidly evolving separatist movements in Iraq.

Any tendency by the Kurds in all three countries to move to full autonomy, subsequent independence, or even eventual unity will be highly destabilizing to the region. And it may now no longer be stoppable, at least in Iraq. Only time, regional events, and the wisdom of state policies will tell. If Ankara ultimately sets out to stop a process that may not be historically reversible, then the turmoil and cost to Turkey will be very high. Not only will it bring about the loss of a considerable portion of Turkish territory, it will inevitably unsettle ethnic relations more broadly over the rest of Turkey, where perhaps half the Kurdish population is widely distributed, well away from their ethnic zones of the southeast. Kurdish events thus may yet have a massive impact on the stability and future of Turkey, the character of its role in the region, and its relationship with the West and the United States.

Chapter Four

TURKEY'S NATIONAL INTERESTS

With the sweeping geopolitical change in the world, Turkey's national interests have changed accordingly. The old Soviet threat may be gone, yet new instabilities have emerged all around Turkey, both more real and more destabilizing than the Soviet threat was.

The central fact determining Turkey's policies toward the former Soviet Union is that modern Turkey came into existence almost simultaneously with Bolshevik Russia in the early 1920s. The existence of a large and primarily hostile USSR has therefore shaped Turkey's view of the world from the outset, impelling it after World War II to join Western defense arrangements. In the post–Cold War world, Turkey no longer even borders on the Soviet Union or Russia. The character of its relations with the Soviet Union has now been disaggregated into a whole series of separate bilateral and regional relationships that are far more complex and, in some cases, present conflicting interests.

The nature of Turkey's relationship with the United States may have changed as well. The global character of the Cold War required the United States to adopt a global strategy that postulated a direct American interest in any country relevant to the East-West conflict. In this environment it was important for Turkey to coordinate closely with Washington on nearly all issues that could affect their joint interests. Today, the global character of U.S. interests has sharply diminished; a region's inherent importance is no longer augmented by its part in East-West rivalry. But the urgent character of political conflict on Turkey's own periphery has raised the geopolitical stakes for Turkey while diminishing them for the United States. Turkey is

therefore certain to be far more outspoken with Washington about its own interests and less likely to conform as fully with, or defer to, diminished U.S. interests in the region.

NEW ALIGNMENTS IN THE REGION

One sign of Turkey's shifting orientation is revealed in its recent interest in the formation of new blocs of states for economic or political ends. Most of these new blocs are formed out of the newly liberated states of Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union. Many of them are tentative in character, may not survive long, or may regroup into yet other blocs.

American interest in the formation of these blocs remains to be seen. On the one hand, they may offer a desperately needed coherence to groups of new states that would otherwise be hard put to exist on their own in economic and security isolation. They could provide building blocks of stability in regions that are still in the process of determining their own new national interests. On the other hand, they could also lead to a weakening of Western or American influence in the region. Ultimately, the integrative character of new blocs should outweigh most negative considerations.

The Black Sea Consortium (BSC)

Formed at Turkey's suggestion, the Black Sea Consortium includes all riparian states of the Black Sea: Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, plus Greece, Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan (not actually riparian). While the Black Sea had served commercial purposes even during the Cold War, it was dominated by Eastern bloc powers, and East-West trade was relatively limited; the sea was also the center of much rival military activity. Today the Black Sea has come into its own, linking states commercially in peacetime, many of which had neither existed as separate entities nor had separate trading policies. The BSC could emerge as a significant regional trading bloc, usefully assisting in the closer integration of trade in a region that did not think of itself as a coherent trade zone in the past. On the other hand, many of these states are poor and unlikely to provide major new stimulus to the economies of the region. Although Turkish membership in the BSC could in principle

complicate Turkish entry into the EC, in fact the EC views the BSC with favor as providing an alternative to EC membership for states that may not be "ready" for admission, and as serving to strengthen the economies of these states on the EC border. Lastly, the successful functioning of this bloc could help establish economic relations between the BSC and the EC over time.

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)

This organization was founded over a decade ago by Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. It has recently been expanded at Iranian initiative to include four of the five Central Asian states (excluding Kazakhstan) and Azerbaijan. It represents an attempt to draw the Central Asian states into the orbit of the Muslim world. Iran in particular hopes to strengthen its own ties with the region by this means. Pakistan has also shown keen interest, since this is a major means for extension of its trade with the West and for gaining access to Central Asian markets. Despite political differences among these states, all of them view the ECO as an institution that serves their mutual interests.

The Caspian Sea Organization

This organization, based in Tehran, was established in 1991 by Iran partly in response to Turkey's Black Sea initiative. The Caspian organization of course excludes Turkey, but includes Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia. It remains to be seen how significant the organization will be, especially alongside the Economic Cooperation Organization—beyond any coordination of policy toward the use of the Caspian.

The Union of Turkic States

Turkey has also proposed the creation of a Union of Turkic States that would unite all the Turkic states of the region—Turkey, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, plus Tajikistan on an honorary basis—in a loose commonwealth for common benefit. Turkey would obviously be the most powerful and influential member of this group. Based as it is on purely ethnic grounds, it would stir opposition from Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan,

and others who would see it as a Turkish effort to gain dominance over the region. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have also stated that they do not favor membership in an organization based on ethnic or religious grounds, but their leaders have so far attended meetings, even while keeping a low profile for the organization.

TURKEY AND RUSSIA

With the death of communism and the collapse of the Soviet Empire, Turkey has far less reason to fear Russian aggression than in the past. Turkey today no longer even has borders with Russia. From the Russian side, too, the bugaboo of "Pan-Turkism," so long touted by a Soviet Union fearful of resurgent internal nationalisms, has now become reality: the empire has in fact collapsed in the face of resurgent nationalism. Newly liberated Russian foreign policy thinking therefore was initially inclined to see Turkey as a now positive player in the region: as a moderate secular state, it could help move the new independent Turkish states of the former Soviet Union in a moderate and secular direction. Indeed, Russia saw Turkey as a successful and useful model of a state that had undergone a partial "perestroika" in the 1980s, away from a statist economic system and toward increased privatization and integration in the world economy.

Those initially optimistic interpretations, however, are beginning to be overshadowed by creeping reassertion of at least some aspects of classic Russian-Turkish geopolitical rivalry. With the end of the Cold War and ideological struggle, and of the colonial era as well, this old rivalry is likely to be far less meaningful than in the last century. Any serious recrudescence of friction between the two states would stir some concerns in the West that it presaged potential Russian expansionism.

Russia still would like to preserve as much as possible of the CIS structure, that de facto tends to reassert the Russian position of *primus inter pares* and also provides a useful structure for the adjudication of interrepublican relations in such areas as security and economic affairs. Russia also seeks retention of the ruble zone as well, as a way of broadening and strengthening its own economy. Turkey, with its increasing involvement in the Caucasus and Central Asia, is the single greatest rival (not to say threat) to Russian great-power

preeminence in these southern regions. Turkish proposals for a Turkic commonwealth or union tend to pull these states out of the Russian orbit—to Russian interests an undesirable, although not intolerable, outcome.[1]

This division of the former Soviet Union into more explicitly Muslim and non-Muslim commonwealths could have undesirable consequences for the region and the West. Central Asian politics under any circumstances already show tensions between the former Russian "masters" of the region—now transformed into often privileged minorities—and the titular native population of each republic, especially in Kazakhstan. If increasing discrimination or bloodshed should result, Russia will be under growing pressure to intervene on behalf of the Russian people and interests that still remain there. If these confrontations should take on an increasingly Muslim vs. Christian character, Islamic fundamentalism will unquestionably grow, and this could strengthen the hand of imperialist, xenophobic elements still present in Russian politics. Such an eventuality would be very undesirable for the West.

Under more optimistic scenarios, Turkey will indeed play a moderate role in the Muslim regions of the former USSR, will support secular government, and will seek close ties with Russia as well as with the Turkish republics—with a search for maximal overlapping of interests. Turkish-Russian mutual interest in maintaining peace in the Caucasus and Central Asia and in regional cooperation in the Black Sea is considerable, and their own relationship could be more important than their bilateral ties with the other Turkic states (except for the very important Russian-Kazakh relationship).

Even if the more optimistic scenarios for the Turkish role emerge as most likely, Central Asia is still destined to be caught between two other great powers, Russia and China. Historically, Sino-Russian ri-

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[1]Old suspicions about Western intentions toward Moscow also reappear when the United States is seen to tout Turkey heavily as the "model" for the Muslim regions of the old USSR, suggesting that Turkey could now become the West's instrument to supplant Russia in this classic area of its influence. And deep within the Turkic-Tatar-Slavic psyche lie memories of past struggles for control over Russia, first by the Mongol-Tatar hordes, and later by medieval Russia resurgent over the Tatars. This element cannot be entirely erased from the psychological backdrop on both sides, even today.

valry has played out in part along the Western borders of China. There is no reason to assume that these historic rivalries will entirely disappear simply because the Cold War is over. Under these circumstances the Central Asian states will be caught between these two forces and compelled to some extent to take sides, especially if China is suppressing the quest for nationalist self-determination among the Turkish peoples of Western China (Xinjiang, or Chinese Turkestan). Turkey cannot remain entirely aloof from that struggle either.

Chapter Five

TURKEY, EUROPE, NATO, AND THE UNITED STATES

TURKEY'S PLACE IN EUROPE

Turkey continues to place great value upon NATO as its leading security and political link to the West over the past forty years, a tangible badge of membership in a democratic Western club. As the importance of NATO diminishes in European strategic calculations, Turkey is becoming concerned that a formal Turkish role in Europe is eroding. This is even more the case as the West European Union grows in stature, accepting Greece as a full member but granting Turkey only associate status. Indeed, the prospects for Turkish acceptance into the EC have probably diminished over the past several years with the emergence of independent states in Eastern Europe who now seek membership in the EC, especially Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Moreover, as Europe moves to develop a common foreign and security policy, Europeans will be reluctant to accept the political and security exposure that Turkey brings with it.

Ironically, as European politics grow more complicated in the post–Cold War world and with the emergence of Eastern Europe, tensions among European states may grow, suggesting that NATO may perhaps end up playing a greater role in brokering quarrels among its members than in focusing on its original mission of regional security. Certainly in the case of Turkey, several issues emerge involving direct Turkish interests. Turkish-Greek relations might be further tested over several traditional issues as well: Greece's militarization of the Greek islands just off the Turkish coast; conflict over air and nautical boundaries between the two countries; the position of the Turkish

minority in Greek Thrace; the problems raised by the declaration of independence by Macedonia and especially Bosnia, with its large Muslim population;[1] Turkish sympathy for the Muslim Albanians in their struggle in Kosovo against the Serbs; and possible Greek-Turkish differences over shifting Balkan politics and alliances, especially after the collapse of Yugoslavia.

Turkish-German relations are also likely to face increasing strain, stimulated in particular by the uncomfortable position of 1.5 million Turkish guest-workers in Germany—some 2 million in Europe altogether—and sharp German public opposition to Turkish policies against the Kurds in Turkey. This latter problem caused the Germans to stop military aid to Turkey in March 1992 and provoked a storm of recriminations and counterattacks at the highest levels of the German and Turkish governments. Germany also showed the greatest reluctance among major NATO powers to support Turkey militarily during the Gulf War, an omission that particularly stung Ankara. And whereas Germany and Turkey were in alignment up to and during World War I, the new Balkan politics conceivably could find Germany and Turkey as rivals for influence. The unprecedented and unpredictable position of an independent Ukraine as a new player in Balkan politics is also likely to affect Turkish-German relations in the Balkans in unforeseeable ways. If Russian nationalists should come to power in Moscow and pursue its historical interests in supporting Orthodox Christian states in the Balkans such as Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria, will Ukraine thus lean toward Turkey and Germany in an anti-Russian, anti-Orthodox stance?

Germany, therefore, may become the major state complicating the Turkish quest for integration into Europe, and the one state within NATO most concerned about the potential for unwanted European involvement in the unstable political situation surrounding Turkey in the East. In simplest terms, many Germans do not want EC borders to be extended to adjoin Iraq, Syria, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Armenia.

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[1]Although the Muslim population of Bosnia is basically Muslim Slav, popular opinion in Turkey often views the Bosnians as "Turks." Indeed, the Muslims of Bosnia themselves early on looked to Turkey for diplomatic support in their struggle for independence and protection.

Whatever the fate of full Turkish membership in the EC, Turkey's relationship with the West does not ride exclusively on this issue. Turkish businessmen are still determined to focus on the European and American markets as the most lucrative, and they are determined to maintain close ties on whatever level with Europe. Turks are not likely to go to Baku, Tashkent, or Alma Ata for vacation; they will continue going in large numbers to Germany, France, and England, partly to visit relatives working there, but mostly because those places are the source of the cultural pull. The Western orientation remains strong and will continue to shape political, economic, and security policy for some time to come, even as Turkey's political options grow more multifaceted.

TURKEY AND U.S. EXPECTATIONS

As NATO's role becomes less certain and membership in the EC becomes increasingly elusive, Turkey will likely look increasingly to the United States as a security partner and source of military assistance and political support. Yet that military assistance, at least in a NATO context, is also likely to diminish as the Russian threat has diminished. Ankara will remain intent on maintaining NATO as its chief vehicle of European status, but it may be an uphill battle as Western Europe begins to place new emphasis on European security arrangements, including a focus on Franco-German military cooperation.

Turkey is undoubtedly entering a very trying and demanding period. Its old foreign policy anchor of Ataturkism and the world familiar to three generations of Turks are now gone. Challenges are breaking out around Turkey in nearly all directions. The nation will be sorely tried in coping with the very complex Kurdish problem, many aspects of which are determined by events not solely under Turkey's control, but involving Iraq and Iran. Under these circumstances, Turkey will seek some kind of mainstay in its security relations. That mainstay almost surely is no longer to be found in Europe. The United States is the most logical partner, with its long historical relationship with Turkey and its abiding global interests, however diminished after the Cold War.

The American relationship with Turkey need not focus exclusively on security issues. Increasingly, both Washington and Ankara are interested in expanding the relationship to include enhanced trade relations (Turkey has sought a U.S.-Turkish free trade area), technical cooperation, and cooperation on policies relating to neighboring areas. Turkish-American cooperation in channeling aid to the Central Asian republics, for example, is high on Turkey's list of interests. But in the new era, Washington will increasingly view these broadened areas of cooperation from a narrower perspective of American interests rather than as part of an extended security relationship in a polarized world.

Despite the fact that its relationship with the United States and NATO has been basically good, Turkey has always been sensitive to issues affecting its sovereignty. The U.S. policy on Cyprus and its desire to use Turkish military facilities during various Middle East crises in the past have all provoked questions in the minds of Ankara's policymakers, including during the Gulf War. Although Turkey has been ready to assist when it sees no threat to its own broader interests, each of these efforts in the past to use its facilities has raised concerns about the compatibility of U.S. and Turkish goals in the region, and whether Washington might not be taking Turkey for granted and intruding on its sovereign interests. This question was raised most sharply during the Gulf War, where many Turks see UN protection for the Iraqi Kurds as leading directly to Kurdish autonomy, if not independence in northern Iraq, greatly to the detriment of Turkey's own Kurdish problem. While Ankara will probably seek American support for many of its own regional policies, it will remain sensitive to any suggestion that it must toe Washington's line in order to keep its support.

As the United States struggles to redefine its national interests in the political environment of the post–Cold War world, the new geopolitics must increasingly take into account the existence of worldwide ethnic and religious fault lines. These fault lines provide clues to potential breakaway states, drives for national unification, or even irredentist movements that may emerge in the coming decades—in a context where political and territorial change is less fraught with global implications than it once was. Turkey is one of those states with potential influence over a broad portion of the world, based on its likely primacy in the newly emerging, far-flung Turkish world.

As noted above, Turkey is now more likely than ever before to pursue its interests with lesser regard for American interests, simply because most issues will be far more important to Turkey and far less important to the United States in the broader scheme of things. As Turkey assumes a more activist role, there are unquestionably greater complexities for all states that maintain security associations with it, simply because Turkey is now more likely to become involved in one way or another with regional conflict—in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and with Iran and Iraq. There is every reason to believe that conflict will grow, rather than diminish, in most of these regions.

Western allies might well then ask—as perhaps some of them already do—whether in fact Turkey has not therefore become a less desirable security partner, when the old Soviet threat is gone and the new regional chaos is hardly inviting for the West. Yet the emergence of these regional problems, crises, and conflicts are not, of course, of Turkey's own doing. They emerge from the end of the Cold War, the collapse of empire, and the emergence of a major geopolitical vacuum. Because Turkey quite literally sits along the borders of this vacuum, it is impossible for it not to be drawn in. The question to be posed, then, is not whether the West wishes to maintain such close ties with Turkey any more, but whether in fact the Turkish presence and involvement in these regions is in Western interests or not.

The reality is that conflict is going to exist in the region around Turkey, probably for a very long time. Given Turkey's past track record of identification with and support for a large variety of the values and interests of the West,[2] is it not still desirable for Turkey to play a role in these regions of crisis? Moderation, responsibility, and general commitment to the international order, to democracy, and to a free-market economy are long and well established in Turkey. Would the United States rather have Serbia as arbiter of the Balkans? Iran or Iraq as arbiter in the Caucasus? Iran as arbiter in Central Asia? Turkey's presence in these troubled regions will in the end most likely exert a moderating influence, even as it pursues its own goals.

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[2]Turkey's adherence to these values may perhaps be imperfect, but how many other states in Western and Eastern Europe also fall short in one respect or another?

It is quite possible that American goals may cross with Turkish goals to some extent on some issues. But channels for discussion and arbitration of these issues have existed for a long time, and the West is familiar and comfortable with a dialog with Turkey. The regions surrounding Turkey are indeed likely to be more chaotic in the decades ahead, but American interests will probably not be lessened because Turkey is attempting to cope with the problems. The most specific areas of potential U.S.-Turkish conflict are likely to be over the following:

- Armenia and Azerbaijan, if events—however rightly or wrongly—force Turkey into full alliance with Azerbaijan, thus turning international Armenian public opinion, especially in the United States, against Turkey.
- Turkish conflict with Greece, in which, regardless of the issues of the case, Washington will be under strong pressure from Greek political groups in the United States, and will also wish to contain the damage to NATO.
- Harsh measures by Turkey against its own Kurdish population, thereby automatically invoking American and international human-rights concerns.
- Significant rivalry between Russia and Turkey in Central Asia, in which Russia, rightly or wrongly, will perceive that the United States is supporting Turkey at Russia's expense. It would not be in the U.S. interest to be pushed into opposition with a democratic Russia if that scenario should emerge.

It will be in the U.S. interest to understand the Turkish vision of the Turkish world, and to consult with it on Ankara's perception of the character of problems and potential change in and around the Turkish world. Washington is under no obligation to accept the Turkish vision of regional politics, but it must surely cope with it as one of the new realities. Of all the states in the region, Turkey is certainly the most desirable "model" to play such a central role in the affairs of this pivotal region. That is why the U.S. relationship with Turkey, despite massive changes in the region and in the world, should remain strong and positive in the decades of challenge ahead.