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INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND EUROPEAN SECURITY: A TURKISH PERSPECTIVE

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In the post-Cold War era, a comprehensive definition of security has emerged. Conceptually, security comprises defense, democracy, human rights and economic development. Hence, the trend in Turkey, just like in the other Western countries, was to look for solutions to regional conflict through the CE, UN, NATO, CSCE, and EU. The essence of Turkish Foreign Policy (henceforth, TFP) became "interdependence through economic cooperation" which, in turn, would promote security. This policy continues unabated even though expectations from international institutions have somewhat been moderated. Because, unless institutions are backed up by political will, they cannot succeed.

Turkish posture towards international institutions and security may be analyzed from at least four perspectives. Namely, Turkey's participation or lack of it in the decision-making bodies of institutions; its efforts to balance the Atlantic and European links; its objective of further democratization; and, its struggle against terrorism and the European security linkage.

Collective Security/National Security:

While the major political parties in Turkey are committed to multilateralism, the radical right and left call for a

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nationalized security policy. This may be a tactical move on their part to legitimize their existence in public opinion. Their rhetoric, meanwhile, is full of conspiracy theories against Turkey concocted by the West and Israel. The radicals may feel that the timing for such a call is well chosen, for there is indeed a rise in nationalist sentiment. However, this feeling is only a reaction to PKK terrorism, and will not affect foreign policy.

Turkey has been practicing both a multilateral and a nationalist foreign policy as far as its security is concerned. Throughout the history of the Republic, it has had a collective security approach on its North and West axis (e.g. the Balkan Pacts of 1934, Montreaux Convention of 1936, and NATO, 1952). In regard to its northern security, Turkey did not settle either for the Truman Doctrine or for bi-lateral relations with the U.S. Nothing short of becoming a member of NATO sufficed. There were other reasons for wanting NATO membership, such as Turkey's European vocation, a desire for a strong institutional link with the West, and Greek membership - in that order. But, the driving motive behind this desire was Turkey's adherence to multilateral security arrangements on its North-West axis.

Turkey's Eastern and Southern policies, on the contrary, have been based on bi-lateral relations. The only exception to that was the Saadabad Pact of 1937 between Turkey, Iran and Iraq for the purpose of collective security against rebellious Kurdish tribes. Otherwise, the major reason for this unilateral approach

to the East and South may be that Turkey did not perceive a military threat from those directions. Secondly, it did not wish to get involved in Middle Eastern quarrels. And, Turkey clearly does not have an obsessive historical interest in the area. Therefore, when and if Turkey gets involved in a Middle Eastern crisis, it is only indirectly.

In 1979, when the leader of the then Republican People's Party, Bülent Ecevit, suggested a New Security Policy, namely that of a national policy, it fell on deaf ears. Some academicians and journalists who supported Ecevit's idea simply reflected the public disappointment with multilateral relations following the infamous Johnson Letter, the U.S. arms embargo, and pressure to limit cultivation of hashish. But, the direction of TFP did not change.

Turkey never geared up for a primarily national approach in foreign and security policies even under the most adverse circumstances in the past, and is not likely to do so in the future. This cannot be accounted for by dependency theory either. The pillar of TFP has been to be part of the international system and international law.

The Post-Cold War Era: What Has Changed?

Since 1989, Turkey has been focusing more on international institutions such as the EU, UN and CE, but not at the expense of NATO. The Atlantic link is of dire importance for Turkey, because a) European institutions cannot solve conflicts, b) collective leadership is not leading to consensus, at least for the time being,

c) NATO is still the most experienced and comprehensive security institution intact, and d) NATO is the most tangible institutional link that ties Turkey to the West.

Turkish strategists and decision-makers seem to be greatly disappointed with UN performance in Somalia. They further believe that UN has failed its historic mission in Bosnia. Although Turkey recognizes the importance of CSCE, policy-makers see two major deficiencies with the organization. One, decision-making is by unanimous vote. Secondly, and perhaps worse yet, CSCE decisions are not binding. A mechanism of enforcement is lacking. In this sense, CSCE remains an instrument of goodwill. Its psychological impact, however, should not be underestimated. The test case here is the recent CSCE decision that the Russian Federation should not play a unilateral peace-keeping role in the Caucasus. H.E. Albert Chernishev, Russian ambassador to Turkey has reiterated in a speech he gave at Bilkent University last week that Russia would not insist on a unilateral peace-keeping mission in the Caucasus, but that they were not averse to taking part in such a mission upon invitation by any country. The former point has yet to be proven, for Azerbaijan has already announced that it does not want Russian soldiers alone.

In addition, it is quite premature to consider WEU as an instrument of enforcement for CSCE and EU. Turkey would have preferred a stronger role for WEU so that there would be a balance between the Atlantic link and Europe. Nonetheless, Turkey's precarious status in WEU prevents it from taking a clear-cut policy approach to this organization.

Since 1947 the West has been identified with NATO and NATO with the US in Turkey. As of 1989, the role of the US has not decreased, but there seemed to grow a balanced move between Western Europe and the US in TFP, despite the over-played pro-American policies during the Özal era. But, the vicissitudes in Turkish-European relations has once again by December 1993 brought forth the factor that Western Europe was to treat Turkey as a second league member by denying the right to vote in WEU; Turkey remains an associate member. A serious imbalance has been introduced by Greece's full membership in WEU while Turkey is left out. Article 5 for the WEU Agreement reads that an attack on one of its members will be treated as an attack on all. Turkey had already announced that if Greece extends its waterways to 12 miles in the Aegean, Turkey will regard this as casus belli. Given Papandreaou's hardline against Turkey, there is increasing risk in this regard - a risk that not only concerns Turkey, but Western Europe as well.

Meanwhile, institutional overlapping becomes a non-issue for Turkey when it has no decision-making power in those institutions. In fact, Turkey finds itself in a dilemma vis-à-vis WEU, for WEU's mandate exceeds that of NATO and its missions may not always be compatible with Turkey's national interest. In the past, Turkey was consistently opposed to NATO's out of area missions. For example, when the Alliance tried to impose a role on Turkey during the Iran-Iraq war, this was not accepted.

It is plausible that Turkey may object to increased membership in NATO, because that would imply directly getting involved with problems in east Europe. Turkey now finds itself exactly in the same situation as those countries which had objected to Turkey's

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entry to NATO for the same reasons. However, Turkey will probably not be averse to new NATO missions as long as those remain on an ad hoc basis. But, if NATO were to become a permanent military tool of the UN or CSCE, this might be incompatible with the national interest. If NATO would be permanently employed to act according to Security Council decisions, Turkey will not welcome such a development. The gist of the matter once again is not being part of the decision-making process.

In addition to NATO, CE is perhaps the only other institution to which Turkey pays more attention. The 1980 military coup has revitalized commitment to full democratization, and PKK terrorism further intensified the quest for human rights and democracy. In this respect, the democratic and human rights standards of the CE has gained more significance.

There are calls from many quarters for a reform package in Southeastern Anatolia. Should the coalition government succeed in overcoming extreme nationalists as well as manage terrorism, Turkey may achieve stability. The recent collaboration of major European governments against PKK activism in their respective countries has affected a sense of belonging in Turkey. Heavy handed Russian policies both domestically and in the Caucasus, and its tendency to defy agreements made with the West (i.e. CFE) must have reminded the West that they need a stable ally in the region. It is in this connection that we may be able to account for Europe's sudden acts of support against PKK terrorism. It has taken Yeltsin's Russia to point out that European security and Turkey's security overlap. That is the major reason why Turkey should not remain as only a buffer zone in European ^{security} perspective.