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## **TURKEY'S ROLE IN THE WORLD: ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS**

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Turkey's Traditional Foreign Policy Orientation

In 1989, there would have been only the narrowest interest in a paper entitled "Turkey's Role in the World." Until that time, Turkey represented a limited, well-known, finite and predictable element in its the region. Turkey in the Western view was basically a country at the far end of the NATO alliance. Its orientation could have been summarized as follows:

The legacy of Ataturk had determined that Turkey should eschew any kind of foreign adventures or irredentism in the region, especially vis-a-vis the Turkic peoples of the USSR. Turkey, after all, came into existence simultaneously with the USSR; its foreign policies have thus been continuously determined by this single large, dangerous neighbor more than by any other factor.

Turkey thus repressed any potential pan-Turkist tendencies--what had been a major intellectual trend in Turkish consciousness starting in the middle of the nineteenth century--thanks in particular to Central Asian, Tatar, and Azerbaijani pan-Turkish thinkers.

Turkey deliberately closed its eyes to domestic aspects of the USSR--except as a security problem. Turkic emigres from the USSR were largely ignored, were not given license to write, to propagate their cause, or to teach their languages and cultures. Even the study of the Russian language was downplayed in Turkey since it suggested the possibility of subversive connections with the USSR and its communist ideology.

Russia had been a key enemy of the Turkish state for over two hundred years, as Russian imperialism gradually expanded south down towards Turkey, both via the Balkans and the Caucasus. An expansionist Tsarist empire was replaced in 1917 with something worse--an expansionist Bolshevik state acting with greater ruthlessness than ever before and wielding a global revolutionary ideology. This challenge thus forced Turkey to look to the West for security--hence its early willingness to participate heavily in NATO.

Turkey furthermore continued to emphasize its Westernness and its secularism on all occasions. Ankara, with only the greatest reluctance, had anything to do with the Arab world, and especially with Islamic organizations; only Turkey's interest in gaining Third World allies on the Cyprus situation against Greece, and the desire for better financial relations with the Arab oil states produced any significant change in Turkey's view of the Arab world.

Turkey was also surrounded by hostile states in the Arab world to the south. Arabs had become in fact natural strategic allies of the USSR: they were recently freed from Western colonialism, were under military and territorial challenge from an Israel supported heavily by the West, and were in need of diplomatic

support and arms in its struggle against Israel--that the USSR was ready to grant in large measure. The Arab states furthermore saw Turkey as a former imperial overlord, and a strategic instrument of the West in the region. Ankara's major shift in relations with the Arab world stemmed primarily from economic grounds--Turkish willingness to send workers and to trade with the oil states of the Gulf and Libya. Otherwise Turkey chose to stay out of Arab politics as much as possible and largely disdained the Arabs as a culture.

Iran--for centuries an ideological rival as the seat of Shi'ism in hostile opposition to the Sunni Ottoman Empire--by the 1920s had begun to warm to Turkey. Once modernist, secularist, nationalist leaders came to power in Iran starting with Reza Shah Pahlevi after World War I, Turkey began to find much in common with Tehran: a shared suspicion of Russia, a desire for a friendly ties in the region for the first time in centuries, an end to ideological religious competition, shared developmental goals, a new Western orientation, and a willingness to join with the West in security arrangements that created the concept of the "Northern Tier states."

Turkey only rarely ventured into any kind of conflict in the region. The one major exception was towards Greece. Greece had of course attempted to establish a grip on the Turkish Aegean coast after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, only to be defeated in several battles by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Greek-Turkish tensions persisted, especially over ownership of many of the islands right off Turkey, and most of all over Cyprus and its large Turkish minority--still politically unresolved even after Turkey's invasion of the island.

Turkey also demonstrated an unusual degree of interest in abiding by international law. In marked differentiation to the post-colonial Arab world--whose self-identity came to be formed in challenging the Western dominated international order--Turkey sought to be part of that order. Its policies were focused more than anything else on its legal relations with NATO and with the United States in particular. As its economic relations with Europe grew, Turkey sent large numbers of its workers to Germany to work as Gastarbeiter, thereby creating a complex relationship with that country including friction over the treatment of Turkish workers and their continued access to participation in the German economy. But apart from a demonstrating a deep sense of self-pride and a prickliness in negotiation, Turkey as a regional player could be characterized as extremely cautious, and oriented towards preserving the status quo. Its foreign policy could in many ways be described as "steady and uneventful"--except on issues relating to Greece that maintained a volatile quality.

#### THE NEW TURKEY

Today, virtually all aspects of Turkey's policies described above have changed. Turkey no longer borders on Russia at all, and Russia--while still a rival--is no longer the same threat. NATO no longer has the same importance to Turkey in strictly security

terms, although Turkey still values it as an institutional means of access to the European community. Turkey now has political ties with the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia that could never exist before. All of these regions are now developing a complex political life of their own in which Turkey can now play. The Ataturkist legacy--at least relating to ties to Turkic ethnic regions in the former Soviet Union--are no longer valid. Turkey has developed keen interests of its own which no longer automatically match those of NATO. Newer Turkish activism suggests a greater likelihood of Turkey's interests diverging more sharply from those of the West on issues such as Bosnia, Azerbaijan and the Kurdish regions of Iraq. Turkey has already begun to think more independently about its interests than it has in the past--except over Cyprus.

Iran has now become an ideological rival again in one sense since the founding of the Islamic Republic; Iran is now also a geopolitical rival for the first time in the modern era--probably on a permanent basis--with the opening up of the long-closed Caucasus and Central Asia where both Iran and Turkey can now play competing geopolitical roles. Iran's territorial integrity is now potentially threatened by the potential future growth of Turkic nationalism and its impact on Turkic-speaking Iranian Azerbaijan and a Turkmen population to the northeast. Turkey is now more involved (perhaps permanently) in the Kurdish regions of northern Iraq and that population's links to Turkey's own Kurdish population. The security of the Persian Gulf also begins to involve a potential new Turkish factor--particularly as a counter-balance to the weight of Iran and Iraq: The smaller Gulf states are interested in "diluting" the geopolitical intensity of the Gulf region with an additional outside presence such as Turkey.

These changes, then, set the stage for a very new geopolitical role for Turkey in the region--involving factors quite unforeseen even five years ago just before the collapse of the Soviet empire.

#### DOMESTIC FACTORS IN TURKISH FOREIGN ROLE

Not only has the international environment surrounding Turkey undergone sweeping change, but the domestic environment too, has seen considerable evolution and change that affects how Turkey sees itself in the world.

The first change is in the growing democratization of Turkish society. Public opinion and the press have now become a significant factor in the formulation of Ankara's foreign policies. Turkish public opinion responded more quickly to the opening up of the Turkic republics in Azerbaijan and Central Asia than did the Foreign Ministry itself. Public opinion was a significant factor in forcing the Foreign Ministry to take a stronger stand against Armenia in support of "brother" Azerbaijan in the ongoing Karabagh problem; prior to that time Ankara had been making progress in improving relations with Armenia and offering it transportation and port facilities on the Black Sea.

Indeed, public opinion would be a vital factor in forcing a significant change upon a Turkish foreign policy elite in one of

two possible dramatic new ideological directions: first, a possible move towards a more nationalistic--even chauvinistic--orientation that would stress the importance of ties with other Turkic states of the world; second, an increase in Islamic orientation that would strengthen Turkey's ties with much of the rest of the Muslim world. Both of these possible alternative trends would represent a major departure from the Ataturkist legacy. The implications of either of these scenarios will be discussed later, but the key factor is the "democratization" of foreign policy to a greater extent than ever before.

The second change in Turkey's domestic situation is the growth of a market economy that has made the business community in Turkey an important new element in national thinking. Turks, of course, for the past several centuries had long been considered a "non-mercantile people," more oriented towards military and administrative affairs. But with the departure of the "mercantile minorities"--Armenians, Greeks, Jews--Turkey over the past decade or two has seen immense growth in its business class and international trade. This development was in part due to the powerful presence of former president Turgut Ozal in the economic sector over a decade; in part due to Turkey's greater activism in the Arab world starting with the oil boom of 1973, and finally with the commercial opportunities that have opened up in the republics of the former Soviet Union, including Russia. The growing class of Turkish international businessmen thus become yet another element of a foreign policy now more susceptible to public opinion.

The third important development involves the growth of the Kurdish opposition movement in the southeast of the country. Over the past four years the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) has stepped up its guerrilla activities in the country, sparking a massive growth of the Turkish military presence in the region. The security of the Kurdish areas has undergone consistent deterioration; army countermeasures have now led to the total destruction of over 800 villages, producing a stream of Kurdish internal refugees. Relations between Kurds and Turks in the southeast are polarizing along ethnic lines. Internal tensions between Turks and Kurds have grown within the country as a whole as PKK terrorism has sparked urban racial incidents and Turkish public anger against any kind of Kurdish separatist tendencies.

Ethnicity is thus a growing factor in Turkey. While the Kurdish problem presents ever more serious concerns, other kinds of more benign ethnic awareness has developed as well, as Turks talk more frequently and openly about their own ethnic backgrounds from Ottoman Empire days: Turks from Bosnia, Albania, other parts of the Balkans, from the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Arab world all discuss their backgrounds in what is potentially a healthy trend towards recognition of the richness of the Turkish social fabric. This recognition of ethnic variation should help foster an increasing acceptance of a long-denied distinct Kurdish minority in the country and will likely broaden Turkey's ties with its neighbors as these special ethnic ties with the region are acknowledged. Liberalization of Turkish society is thus a

potentially hopeful trend for the future.

#### TWO SOURCES OF POTENTIAL IDEOLOGICAL CHANGE IN TURKEY

But it is important to recognize that a more negative trend, that of national chauvinism, could also emerge. This chauvinism could emerge in part from a growing ethnic focus on the broader Turkic world. While these trends are still muted today, how many nations ignore close ethnic ties with other peoples around the world? Why should Turkey not seek to gain maximum advantage from the other Turkic states of the world? Continued negative developments in the internal Kurdish situation could also spark growing Turkish nationalism, especially if it turns towards refusal to grant the Kurds any kind of cultural or political autonomy that they seek. Furthermore, continued turndowns from the European Community to integrate Turkey into the organization could also produce some kind of backlash as Turkey is seemingly denied equality among the Western community: this trend might spark an interest in exploring the path of greater ethnic identity within the region.

A second alternative would be a reexamination of Turkey's religious identity and its foreign policy implications. This development would involve a significant departure from the Ataturkist legacy of secularism. But several factors could bring this about. First, the secular reforms of Ataturk--extremely important to the development of a successful modern Turkey--had its negative side in suppressing the long cultural legacy of Turkey as the center of the Caliphate and of Sunni Islam. The Ottoman Empire represents one of the most glorious pages in the annals of Islamic history. As modern Turkey begins to come to terms with its past once again--a natural process in the long task of nation building--its Islamic legacy will also undergo reexamination and reassessment.

A more self-confident Turkey need not exclude its Islamic connections just because of a Western orientation in broad aspects of its culture. It is surrounded by largely Muslim countries who loom large as factors in Turkey's economic and security relationships. As economic and social problems have emerged in Turkey, it is not surprising to find that Islamic politics are becoming more prominent; in the regional elections of 1994, Islamist politicians gained control of Turkey's two largest municipalities: Istanbul and Ankara, and control many smaller ones as well. It is unlikely that Islamist politics in Turkey are going to become the dominant force in the future: Turkey's politics are open, democratic, the Islamists have many rivals, and do not hold out some magical promise to the electorate as they do in states like Algeria and Egypt where they have been suppressed to one or another degree. Radical Islam in particular is not likely to gain a strong following in the country, even if it will always be a part of the political spectrum of any Muslim state. But even if the Islamist Refah (Welfare) Party does not come to power, there will probably be growing domestic interest in the Muslim character of Turkey--reflecting mass, rather than elite, opinion--and its

implications for Turkey's foreign policy. If the Refah Party does come to power, it will accelerate such a trend--not as a rejection of the West, but as providing a balance to what some see as an unnecessary tilt away from Turkey's roots in favor of the West.

In short, the old, centralized, officially mono-ethnic, inward-looking, rigidly Ataturkist Turkey of the past is giving way to a much more flexible social situation in which Turkey's options and alternatives for the future have increased. This situation will complicate the West's relationships with Turkey. On the other hand, this trend represents an almost inevitable gravitation of Turkey towards a more balanced--and more complex--relationship with its cultural past that embraces both Islamic and Western traditions.

#### TURKEY AND EUROPE

Let us now examine in greater detail the character of Turkey's regional relations, starting with Western Europe. Several key factors emerge in Ankara's ties. All these factors are undergoing a process of considerable evolution, and should be noted as significant elements to watch in the future.

NATO: While NATO's future role is uncertain, the institution still represents a vital link for Turkey with Europe and the US, and provides some vestigial security ties that Turkey needs. Turkey will remain an active supporter of NATO--and the European status that it confers upon Turkey.

Emigrants: Turkey now has over two million emigrants in Europe, mostly in Germany and Sweden. Approximately one third of these are Turkish Kurds, a higher percentage than inside Turkey itself. The emigrant population has in part been a source of friction with Germany, especially in its search for improved legal status and even citizenship in Germany. Returned workers bring new European political, social, and even work values back to Turkey--with noticeable impact--who help bring Turkey culturally closer to Europe. Conversely, however, some Islamic fundamentalist (or Islamist) groups have become quite active among the Turkish population in Europe, contributing to a broader new European problem: the necessity for integrating Muslim culture into European society. In the end, however, European culture is likely to have greater impact upon Muslim populations than the converse. But an additional concern for Europe is the "export" of terrorism to Europe--not necessarily against European targets, but representing a playing out of Middle Eastern and Balkan political violence on Western European soil. It is already a problem: the Kurdish problem has been exported to Europe, given its proportionally large Kurdish population, its political activities, the violence of its major organization (the Kurdish Workers Party--PKK), and its involvement in the drug trade there as a source of income for its political activities. Iranian and Arab politics also have a terrorist facet in Europe.

The Balkans: Turkey now has strong interest in the evolution of the Bosnian situation and the fate of its Muslim population. Turkey is likely to become the de facto main regional source of

support for all the Muslims of the Balkans (Bosnia, Albania, minorities in Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Greece.) Turkey's support to such groups establishes a de facto religious basis to this aspect of Turkey's new foreign policy--even if it is termed "cultural" rather than religious.

The West will need to be mindful of Turkey's special interests here. It may wish to be sympathetic to Turkey's desire for an unofficial role of spokesman for the region's Muslim population. While Europe may be reluctant to grant Turkey such a role, there are others waiting in the wings to do the same: Saudi Arabia and Iran, for starters. Iran, in particular, has sought to play the defender of the Bosnian Muslims and has made repeated quasi-clandestine shipments of arms there. Certainly the West would prefer Turkey playing this role of Muslim spokesman if anybody must.

Mediterranean Security: Security thinking in the Mediterranean is increasingly evolving towards the creation of a CSCM--the Mediterranean equivalent of the Council for Security Cooperation in Europe (CSCE.) Treatment of the Mediterranean region as a unit, rather than a fault-line between Europe and Arab North Africa, is an idea well overdue. Turkey, as the most important country of the eastern Mediterranean, will have a key role in such an organization, and is in a position to exert potential influence over the strategic thinking of the Arab states on the Mediterranean as well. In this capacity, Turkey will no longer represent the "last Western outpost" in the east, but the very center of a new Turkic-oriented world that has now come to impinge more closely upon Europe--starting with CSCE involvement in the Caucasus and the Central Asian states memberships in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC).

#### TURKEY AND THE CAUCASUS

As we noted earlier, Caucasian politics have opened up rather violently with virtual war between Armenian and Azerbaijan over the Armenian-populated Karabagh region in Azerbaijan, and the civil war and other ethnic conflicts within Georgia. Turkey is still struggling to evolve a broader policy in this region. Several alternative strategies suggest themselves. First, Turkey--again in sharp reversal of the Ataturk legacy--could actually decide to rival Russia for regional influence in the Caucasus, i.e., to supplant Russian influence where possible. All three Caucasian states have reason to want to limit Russian influence over their internal affairs, but find it difficult to do so. Russia has played a very skillful game from 1992-1994 to reassert its voice in these states using some fairly rough political tactics--including sometimes not-so-hidden support for separatist ethnic groups (in Georgia), support to military forces (in Armenia), and to military forces (in Azerbaijan) in fomenting a coup against nationalist leader Elchibey.

Turkey does not remotely dispose of these same resources or abilities at present to play as an equal to Russia in a Caucasian game. Nor does it wish to directly challenge Russia in this way.

Over time, however, Turkey will develop greater capabilities, as it establishes contacts and followers within these societies, many of whom are looking for alternative forces to balance Russian influence. In fact, all Caucasian states will welcome the potential balancing effect of a Turkish role in the region, even if it will only come slowly. Russia's natural role in the region is also undergoing gradual evolution. Its role today is likely to diminish over time as the former republics broaden their ties and seek other options to complement undeniably important ties with Russia.

For Turkey the complex question will be whether it will seek a broader, more neutral, role as an alternative major power to rival Russian influence, or whether it will become just one more regional contender, supporting one Caucasian state in an alliance against another. Given the rivalries among the Caucasian states themselves, it may be difficult for Turkey to remain aloof from these rivalries. In principle, for example, while maintaining close ties with Azerbaijan, Turkey could also establish closer ties with Armenia, offering it valuable commercial access to the Black Sea. Yet Armenia's support for Karabagh separatism in Azerbaijan forced Turkey to show its support for its Turkic "brothers" there against Armenia. For Turkey, a balanced role between Armenia and Azerbaijan may therefore be almost an impossibility, at least as long as the Karabagh problem remains unresolved. A more likely scenario for future Caucasian politics, therefore, might involve Turkish support for Azerbaijan and possibly Georgia against a Russian-supported Armenia. Under such circumstances, Iran too, might well be part of the Russian-Armenian grouping. But complex internal politics within all of these republics makes even this kind of scenario perhaps too simplistic. What is certain is that Caucasian politics will be riven, Turkey will increasingly be a player in them, and almost certainly in opposition to Russia's own influence. Russia is extremely unlikely to be able to regain and retain its former influence there; it will inevitably wane as the Caucasian republics develop new external options and new nationalist leaders come to the fore determined to maintain considerable independence of action vis-a-vis Russia.

#### TURKEY AND CENTRAL ASIA

Turkey rivals Russia not only in the Caucasus but in Central Asia as well. Russia obviously exerts far greater strength at the present time in being able to exert or even impose its influence in Central Asia. The republics need financial and economic ties with Russia since their own economies are not yet able to compete on the international market yet, except in the sale of energy and perhaps a few minerals such as gold. The largely neo-communist leaderships throughout the area (Kyrgyzstan's Askar Akaev being a significant exception) create a predisposition among them to deal with Moscow as well since Moscow tacitly--often more than tacitly--accepts the current leaderships and supports them. While almost none of these leaderships will accept dictation from Moscow, they are more comfortable in the political environment of the ex-Soviet

Union (or the CIS).

Yet over time, the present leaderships of the Central Asian republics are likely to be challenged by more nationalist leaders that wish to distance themselves yet further from Moscow's influence. Over time too, the intercourse between the Central Asian republics and the outside world will grow--with China, East Asia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Western Europe, the Arab world, and the US--reducing proportionately the Russian share of economic ties. Russia may always remain the dominant trading partner, but much of this will depend on how attractive Russia is as an economy and as a trading partner.

Turkey, in the meantime is rather limited in its financial and commercial resources; it lacks the economic clout to exert impressive influence in the region. On the other hand, Turkish policies that emphasize cultural ties, the spread of a knowledge of Istanbul Turkish through educational grants to Central Asian students to study in Turkey, the spread of Turkish books in Central Asia, the return of Central Asia to a common Turkish alphabet, and Turkish investment in communication facilities--all serves to slowly build a special role for Turkey in the region. Turkey is likely to work to develop this special role over the long haul.

While it can be only speculation, it is my supposition that the role of Turkic consciousness or solidarity will in fact grow in Central Asia over time. At present, the neo-communist leaderships are largely cool to any kind of "pan-Turkism," partly because the term was a reviled and forbidden one in the Soviet Union for seventy years or more. To a whole generation or more of regime officials it smacks of reaction. Yet few nations in the modern world reject ideas of linguistic unity and cultural commonality as a political force working to their benefit. (Ideas of Germanic solidarity would seem to be virtually dead, but even pan-Slavic idealism could be undergoing a renaissance.) Future, more nationalist Central Asian leaderships may find attraction in deriving benefits, where possible, from some kind of informal or even formal special ties among the states. Who will seek to invoke and lead such a grouping for mutual benefit? As we noted above, Turkey would be the leading candidate under certain domestic conditions that emphasized nationalist, pan-Turkist, or even chauvinistic views.

It is premature therefore, to the long-term impact of the Turkish role in Central Asia--as many have done based on a more superficial look at the early years of these relationships. Early expectations of a huge resurgence of pan-Turkish relationships were obviously overblown, but the subsequent sobering to realities should not obscure the potential power of ethnicity as a linkage in the future. Turkish businessmen, too, sense special opportunities that go beyond mere Turkish state planning alone. The full realities of the new relationships are just barely becoming known in their most rudimentary form. Turkey will thus find its place in Central Asia among many competing rivals, Russian as well as regional, but ethnicity will play a distinct role.

But conceivably too, Turkey could find a rival for leadership

of the Turkic states in Uzbekistan, whose demographic and cultural weight already worries many of the other republics (and especially non-Turkic Tajikistan) who see it as a form of historic Uzbek chauvinism. Already Uzbekistan is the chief proponent of a greater Central Asian grouping because it sees itself as the primary beneficiary and leader. For just this reason, other Turkic states wish to avoid lending Tashkent any special hold over them at this stage. But the politics of the region are still young. Turkey might develop a rivalry with Tashkent over such a broader Turkic grouping. Turkey too, is instinctively aware that the neo-communist leaderships in power today tend to strengthen the Russian hand in the region, whereas nationalist leaderships--such as witnessed in the brief period of Elchibey in Azerbaijan--demonstrate a greater tendency towards a pan-Turkish orientation. Turkey therefore tends to favor democratic processes in the region as benefiting their interests. The Russians, conversely, are aware of this same factor and find the present neo-communist leaderships generally more convenient to Moscow's own interests.

As in the Caucasus, Turkey will also find itself a rival to Iran in Central Asia. There was no opportunity for such competition before the independence of the Central Asian republics. Today, despite Tehran's broad interests in the "export of the revolution," it has actually been very cautious and conservative in its policies in Central Asia according to nearly all observers. It does not wish to be excluded from the region by rulers who are strongly opposed to the growth of political Islam. And as in the Caucasus, it is quite possible Iran could cooperate with Russia in an effort to limit Turkish influence.

#### TURKEY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Gulf War against Saddam Hussein was a major turning point for Turkey in the Middle East. Turkey for the first time was engaged in serious hostilities against an Arab neighbor, and was deeply involved, via the Western-run Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq, in helping shape the future of the Iraqi Kurds within the Iraqi state. Turkey has thus become a de facto player in limiting the regional ambitions of Iraq. States such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia see genuine benefit in a Turkish role in the region that balances the twin threat of Iran and Iraq. For this reason alone then, Turkey is now involved in the Middle East in new ways relating to the critical issue of Gulf security. Second, the opening up of the Kurdish problem in Iraq accelerated the evolution of the Kurdish problem within Turkey itself. The Kurds, with their twenty million population spread out among Turkey, Iraq and Iran, have become a new factor in the security and geopolitical equation of the region, with unforeseeable consequences.

Turkey has long maintained diplomatic relations with Israel--albeit at a modest level--but now seems more interested in strengthening those relationships now that the Arab-Israel conflict is moving towards resolution. Pressure on both Syria and Iraq would seem to be key elements of this policy--policy designed in particular to pressure both those states from supporting the PKK

against Turkey.

While the Turkish-Israeli relationship could be seen as a throwback to the earlier Cold War geopolitical polarization of the region--Turkey as a strategic instrument of the West in the Arab world--the chances are that this situation is evolving in new directions. We have discussed the possibilities of a future Turkish strategy based alternatively on either a nationalist-pan-Turkish basis or an Islamic basis. While the first strategy would strongly alienate most of the Arab world--that would see it as a reversion to earlier days of Turkish imperialism in the region--a more Islamic, non-ethnically oriented policy would be more reminiscent of the Ottoman period. The Ottoman legacy too, is not congenial to the Arabs since they were subjects within that empire, but it could take on new meaning if Turkey were perceived to be operating more "objectively" in the region and less in conjunction with purely Western goals. Such a policy might involve Turkey taking sides with some Arab states--more moderate ones--against more radical forces. We already see some hint of this in talk of a Turkish-Egyptian-Israeli grouping. If the Islamist Refah (Welfare) Party comes to power in Turkey--not inconceivable, it could well pursue such a policy, with strong ties to Saudi Arabia as well--unlike many other Islamist parties in the region that pursue more anti-status quo policies.

Finally, Turkey could also pursue a strategy based on the creation of a democratically oriented, moderate bloc of regional states--a kind of new Middle East bloc without any specific Muslim overtones. Such a policy would still require Turkey to be more comfortable with its Middle East heritage and ties with the Arab world from the past, and the need to work on a basis of equality. Such policies are not unthinkable in the future, especially if Turkey recognizes the lack of wisdom in closing off its vision towards the Middle East for emotional and ideological reasons as it has done in over past decades. The building of a democratic coalition of regional states in opposition to radical or "old-fashioned" Arab nationalist states would represent a new alignment of forces in the area--especially of states interested in moving in a more modernist direction--willing to deal with the West, but from a basis of strength.

#### CONCLUSION: REVISITING THE NORTHERN TIER CONCEPT

The Northern Tier concept had several distinct characteristics. First, it involved a group of "orphan states," states that had no close ties or friendships in the area based on ethnic ties--in distinction to the Arab world. Second, the states all perceived a threat from the USSR, and were also happy to invoke the Russian threat to a sympathetic ear in Washington ready to help them with security assistance. Third, these states had few conflicts among themselves and were all trying to sort out their processes of modernization. They recognized the benefits of forming a bloc to counterbalance the Arab bloc--one that tended to be linked with the USSR for reasons discussed earlier. A bloc also offered potential economic benefits to all members--although

only modestly realized. Pakistan at its end, craved strategic depth against the Indian colossus that was regularly able to defeat Pakistan in all armed confrontations.

Today much of the earlier rationale for the creation of a "Northern Tier Bloc" has gone. Russia no longer borders any of these states. The Cold War is over and the group is not able to invoke Western security assistance. They are less cohesive as a group now, especially following the Islamist revolution in Iran, and the civil war and anarchy in Afghanistan. They tend to see developmental issues in different terms today. On the other hand, the Northern Tier concept has been revived with the emergence of the independence states of Central Asia. Today the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) includes all the Central States as well--although Russia maintains that membership in the CIS excludes membership in other regional organizations--especially where security is involved. The ECO now includes all the states of "classical Central Asia" before it was artificially divided by the Soviet Iron Curtain. This organization, then, may come to form the new Central Asian grouping that goes beyond the current limits of the five former Soviet republics alone. It could logically eventually grow to include Tibet and Xinjiang.

The new ECO grouping has far more benefits to Central Asia than a mere organization of Central Asian states alone. It offers far greater diversity among its member states, their capitalist experience, their ties with the West--especially Turkey and Pakistan--and the great variety of alternative routes to the sea they offer: the Indian Ocean via Pakistan, the Gulf via Iran, and the Mediterranean via Turkey. To date, however, the new ECO has been extremely modest in its activities. All members must gauge the benefits of organization membership versus opportunities for bilateral relationships. The differing political character of many of its members (especially between Turkey and Iran), and the requirements of CIS membership for the former Soviet Republics all constrain the organization. Potentially, however, it would seem to offer much potential--economic and political relationships that none of the member states could afford to lose.

In sum then, in speaking of the new "Northern Tier," it is necessary to recognize that a very new version of it has emerged that offers new potential on a much different basis than the old. Will it come to represent a counter-weight to Russia? Or to the Arab world? Or will it maintain good relations with both? The answers to these questions are far from clear at the present time. But we must recognize that new geopolitical forces are now at work. Turkey has been more transformed by the new world order in this region than any other state except Russia itself. But the old concept of the Northern Tier in general is now taking on important potential new life, especially as concept of a Greater Central Asia becomes associated with it.

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