

TURKEY'S SECURITY PERSPECTIVES AND PERCEPTIONS

Turkey's security perspectives can be analysed in terms of concentric circles. The nucleus is the Turkish domestic scene, followed by her immediate security environment comprised of neighbours. Then comes the broader geography consisting of regions and countries that have indirect bearing on Turkey's security concerns yet which have historical, cultural or ethnic affinities. Euro-Atlantic and wider frameworks of security including NATO and the EU is the following building block. Finally the uniquely universal security organisation, the UN completes the picture. In short, the new security environment presents the international community with universal challenges which must be addressed with vision, determination, solidarity and cooperation, if future generations are to be given a better world. A building-blocks approach to security issues, starting at the immediate environment with a view to enhancing mutual understanding, confidence and cooperation, moving on to a wider geo-strategic context through effective use of multilateral mechanisms, thus pursuing active and positive engagement in a geo-strategic continuum is a viable approach. Turkey has the right strategic vision and capacity to bring its useful contribution in this context.

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Turkey's security perspectives can sensibly be analysed in terms of concentric geo-strategic circles. I would like to start with the nucleus, i.e. the Turkish domestic scene. The main problem in Turkey for several decades, with clear security implications, had been the lack of national consensus on certain ideological issues.

- During the 70s there was the ideological polarization between "left" and "right" that developed into militancy and fighting in the streets. This was essentially the product of the global competition between Soviet style socialism and liberalism. The ensuing turmoil led to the temporary suspension of Turkey's democratic process. The end of the Cold War brought with it the discrediting of Soviet socialism and the triumph of market economy thereby precipitating end of this type of polarization in Turkey.

- Meanwhile it had become clear that the ideological left incorporated nationalist Kurdish ideology, under the guise of Kurdish Marxism. The initial alliance ended with parting of the ways, separatist Kurds embarking on their own bloody campaign through PKK terrorism. PKK benefited from financial support from expatriates in Western Europe as well as political, logistic and even operational support from some of Turkey's neighbours. It entered into an unholy alliance with Greek Cypriots and the Armenian Diaspora. Sanctuary was provided in neighbouring territories from which PKK could launch cross-border incursions. The vacuum of central authority in Northern Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf War contributed to this situation. The attitude of certain Western European countries and human rights groups that preferred to view the PKK not as "professional" separatist terrorists --which they were-- but as freedom fighters, encouraged more radicalism. When the PKK began to think that it actually had the military might necessary to win the conflict and bring about nationwide ethnic confrontation and polarisation, they made a crucial miscalculation with regard to the fact that the integration of the Kurds into Turkish society had made irreversible headway. It also miscalculated the power and determination of the forces dedicated to the Republic. Nonetheless, PKK was able to become a formidable security challenge, draining Turkey's resources and causing immense human suffering, but most importantly, retarding democratisation and human rights reforms.

- Ideological Islam has also been a source of polarisation. The driving forces behind the international rise of political Islam were essentially Khaddafi's Libya and the Khomeini revolution in Iran. Turkey had its share politically motivated religious activists. Particularly in the 90s, Islamic activism entered a period of political ascendance. Iran, wary of the Turkish model of secular democracy, was particularly supportive, not to

mention other conservative Arab states. Fundamentalist expatriates in certain European countries could operate freely, and provided financial resources. Religious orders flourished in the country, influencing the political structure and politics. Eventually, the segments of society loyal to the principle of a secular republic gave rise to a widespread popular backlash against political Islam. This was expedited by the uncovering of the horrific exploits of Hezbollah (not related to Hezbollah in Lebanon) which was a fundamentalist element in the underground Kurdish movement that had initially gone into a power struggle with the PKK. The Stalinist model that the latter espoused was seen as an ideological challenge. As the PKK declined, Hezbollah broadened its target and engaged in terrorism against Islamic moderates and secular intellectuals. Draconian measures, spearheaded by the military, had to be introduced to turn the tide.

So much for the bad news. The good news is that compared to even a few years ago, Turkey is much better off. We have been able to achieve national consensus on a number of important issues which became tangibly evident during the elections of November 2002.

- Ethnic separatism has been shunned by the nation. The political party running on a ticket of Kurdish nationalism, notwithstanding its appeals to the electorate to cast their votes on ethnic grounds, remained at a little over 6%. This fell considerably short of the estimated percentage of the ethnic Kurdish population. The message was clear: Turkey's Kurds overwhelmingly chose national conciliation and are committed to seeking their well-being through alignment with mainstream politics. It was possibly due to recognition of this fact that the PKK had already professed to have abandoned terrorism and adopted the strategy of seeking international political recognition under the new name of KADEK. Termination of support from outside was also decisive. Syria's decision to expel PKK leadership thus precipitating the apprehension of Öcalan, was a major blow. Iran under Khatami embarked on good neighbourly relations with Turkey and terminated support of the PKK. Turkish-Greek rapprochement had similar consequences.

- Radical and ideological Islam, having been banned from politics, likewise went into decline. Reform minded moderates, having campaigned on bread and butter issues, emerged as the clear winners of November 2002 elections. This is a sign of national conciliation of quite some significance. Turkey has produced its own version of "Christian Democrats" as a mainstream center-right political movement. After years of fragile

coalitions, a single-party government and a single-party opposition bode well for political stability and effectiveness.

- Ethnic terrorism having been virtually eliminated, Turkey's democracy has found a breathing space to lick its wounds and embark on reforms. The previous parliament was able to pass in the summer of 2002 a very comprehensive package of legislation aimed at complying with the Copenhagen criteria. That process can now continue with more confidence and ease.

- The development of civil society in Turkey is another important element of national conciliation and broad consensus building. An effective network of societal checks and balances, contributing to national motivation and consciousness, has taken root. It provides powerful incentive for responsible and responsive behaviour on the part of all.

- The relationship between civil and military establishments is also at an optimum level. The constraints of our security environment imposes on our armed forces a prominent role that is not easily understood by some of our European allies. A decade of military confrontation with the PKK upset certain balances. Normalisation is rapidly rectifying this situation. Certain presentational improvements still need to be made. What all and particularly potential troublemakers should understand is that the Turkish armed forces are professional and efficient, constantly modernising itself. They are highly motivated, but in a restrained way. It is not a hindrance but a contributor to healthy democratic process.

Moving out from the nucleus to the first of the concentric circles, the innermost circle is comprised of our immediate security environment. We live in a conflict prone neighbourhood. The legacy of its common history exerts considerable influence, presenting both challenges as well as opportunities. Security challenges have largely emanated from regimes that lack democratic accountability and the checks and balances of political pluralism. Popular support and diversion from domestic problems have often been sought through the exploitation of historic grievances as well as current differences. Failure to contribute to the creation of mutual confidence and understanding has led to perceptions of incompatibility of national interests, a deterministic sense of rivalry and often hostility. Bold initiatives to overcome endemic problems are scarce. The fractured demographic and ethnic environment has been the root-cause of much friction and even direct conflict. Such an

environment has often been exploited by renegade movements –especially the PKK- to carry out their operations with a minimum of constraint. Such an environment inevitably entails dangerous reliance on armaments. Militarisation has been a pervasive fact of life. Acquisition of the capability to produce weapons of mass destruction and a means for their deliverance has been a constant endeavour.

I realize that I have drawn a somber picture. But this is by and large how Turkey's immediate environment has been for decades, and perhaps, more accurately, since the end the Cold War. Suffice it to say that of the 19 potential conflict scenarios that NATO military authorities have identified for planning purposes, 18 would require Turkey's involvement one way or another. The fact that two of our neighbours are depicted as part of an "evil triangle" and a third remains on the US list of countries sponsoring terrorism is not a situation Turkey can take comfort in.

Now for the good news which is that Turkey has moved into an increasingly prominent position in the region, a force that will contribute to stability, dialogue and cooperation. Our own security interests call for sustained efforts towards this end. It is an undisputable fact that military preparedness is the indispensable basis of such security. We do not have the luxury, as some of our Allies do, to take this requirement lightly. On the other hand, lasting stability requires the ability of states to demonstrate the political will, in a sustained manner, to rise above differences and to bring about mutual accommodations based on common interests. In this process, dialogue and confidence building are essential tools. Promoting cooperation and developing projects of long-term mutual interest are effective answers to security concerns.

Of course, there may be times and circumstances in which such approaches may be easier to articulate than they are to implement. The Iraqi scene is a case in point. It would be a great contribution to security and stability in our region if Iraq could be brought back into the community of nations as a responsive and responsible state, respectful to the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. Maintaining the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq will be crucial to any viable overall solution. Turkey is, to say the least, uncomfortable with the prospect of military action. The responsibility for avoiding such action clearly rests upon the Iraqi government. If the military option were to become inevitable, the results of such a campaign must be thought through very carefully, with due consideration to the preferences of the Iraqi people.

With the exception of Armenia, Turkey has been able to create an environment of cooperation and good neighborliness with all of its contiguous neighbors during recent years. Historic grievances have been largely put aside and pursuit of mutual economic interests is increasingly serving as a catalyst for confidence building. Transit of oil and gas through pipelines presents incentives for better relations.

Stability in southern Caucasus is important for Turkey. The Turkish military has entered into assistance arrangements with Azerbaijan and Georgia to develop their armed forces. Our initiative for a "Stability Pact for South Caucasus", an important element of which would be regional Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs), has been hampered by the intractable nature of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. For societal and economic development the region needs more than the undesirable stability represented by the current state of affairs, which is simply "no war, no peace". Efforts must be intensified for a just and lasting solution. Certain recent developments leave room for optimism. If, however, Armenia could reduce the influence of the Diaspora and make peace with history, hence with Turkey, prospects for the region would improve rapidly. Developments in our relations with Greece have increasingly reduce perceived security risks on both sides. A just and lasting settlement in Cyprus will no doubt enhance security and stability in our immediate vicinity and beyond.

Moving on to the next concentric geo-strategic circle, we reach a broader geography consisting of regions and countries that have indirect bearing on Turkey's security concerns. On the other hand, most of these countries have affinity with us, be it historical, ethnic or cultural. This is a realm that lends itself to multilateral approaches to building security and stability through regional arrangements.

The Balkans is a case in point. Turkey is party to all international initiatives aiming at conflict prevention, democratic consolidation and economic rehabilitation. Our intensified bilateral relations also contribute to regional stability. The Multinational Peace Force of South Eastern Europe was Turkey's brainchild, which led the way to the creation of SEEBRIG, the South East Europe Brigade bringing together countries in the Balkans with a view to fostering mutual confidence and good neighbourly relations. We welcome the commitment of the international community to the well-being of the region and urge its unwavering continuation, in line with the expectations and aspirations of the people.

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation initiative of Turkey has now acquired substance and scope, reinforcing perceptions of commonality of interest and bringing together countries which otherwise would be reluctant to interact. Turkey is actively promoting confidence and security building mechanisms in the Black Sea. BLACKSEAFOR, another Turkish initiative, has for the first time in history brought together the navies of all littoral countries for joint tasks ranging from humanitarian rescue operations to any other task that can be jointly decided in the future.

Turkey supports the efforts of the new Central Asian republics in their transition to modern state structures. These countries must be integrated into the international community. Their active involvement in Eurasian security and cooperation frameworks such as NATO and OSCE must be encouraged and facilitated.

I hesitate to comment on the Middle East. The intractable nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the spiraling mutual hostility and extremism are a matter of genuine concern for Turkey. Due to its good relations with both parties in the conflict, Turkey has repeatedly sought to bring its positive influence to bear on the continuation of the peace process. At a minimum, we have tried to contribute to be a defusing factor in circumstances that could lead to escalation. However, the inevitable lesson that any honest broker learns in the context of the Middle East is to scale down one's ambitions and to be prepared for frustrations. One cannot help feeling sorrow for a conflict will likely continue until it bleeds itself to death.

The next geo-strategic concentric circle moves us to the Euro-Atlantic and wider frameworks of security. At the forefront is the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Our NATO membership, which goes back to 1952, was a response to our security concerns during the Cold War. Turkey was able to maintain a non-belligerent status during the Second World War. However with the advent of the Cold War and the security perceptions that this gave rise to, it became clear that Turkey could not maintain its security and defence on its own. We therefore sought security in the collective defence framework provided by NATO. This was also a natural consequence of our determination to integrate with the West. As for the USA, the driving force behind NATO, Turkey's geo-strategic particularities were indispensable for the "containment" policy against Soviet expansionism.

As a NATO member, Turkey has not been at the receiving end only. We have contributed to collective defence as a staunch ally, providing and hosting military capabilities, including nuclear deployments, in connection with possible roles under Article V of the Alliance treaty. Today, in response to the requirements of the new security environment, Turkey is a clear contributor to the maintenance of international peace and stability, a contribution that has increased in direct proportion to Turkey's military and political "clout".

In the post-Cold War era, NATO underwent remarkable change in adapting itself to an evolving security environment. This was not without reluctance and heated debate. "Out of area" involvement was considered by many as unthinkable. In a sense, "out of area" events imposed themselves onto NATO. The Gulf War was the first imposition. Iraqi invasion of Kuwait constituted an indirect security challenge because it had serious consequences for the West's oil supplies. NATO and its allies acted in support of the coalition that did the fighting. Bosnia was not as lucky as Kuwait. By the time the new US administration found it impossible to stand by, hundreds of thousands of Bosnian Moslems had perished as a result of ethnic cleansing. Military involvement in Bosnia was followed by the Kosovo and Macedonia operations.

There has since been a radical change in mentality. NATO is no longer on the defensive as it was in the Cold War period. It now has the possibility, capacity and the political will to project the values that the Washington treaty is based on. There is an increasing predisposition to assume responsibilities in shaping "out of area" regions. As the Balkan scene demonstrated, whether or not NATO intervenes in a timely manner makes the difference between protracted strife and human suffering on the one hand, and viable nation building and stability on the other. The two waves of NATO expansion have been the culmination and concretisation of NATO's active agenda of "creating a Europe whole and free". Engaging Russia as a partner in this process has been a crucial policy foresight.

In a functional sense, involvement in the Balkans has given NATO valuable experience with regard to an increasingly relevant topic: conflict prevention, peace making and crisis management. But there has been another watershed that has subjected all this accumulated experience to scrutiny in a different light. September 11th gave rise to the realisation that the new security environment could face challenges of an imminent and devastating nature. Ironically, September 11th underscored the fact that there may be a heavy price to pay for pursuing an agenda of active international engagement. The target was the USA, the invincible and only super-

power, the ultimate arbiter with an assertive global vision and ambitions. The prospect of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and means for their deliverance winding up in the wrong hands and what this means in terms of blackmail or for actual, indiscriminate terrorist use suddenly became all too real.

While orchestrating a broad international backlash against terrorism, the US set out to deal with the threat pretty much unilaterally. The “War against terror” became the focal point of all subsequent activity. This is not a passing agenda. The threat may be elusive, but those that provide sanctuary and support may be more identifiable. The Taliban was a case in point. Initially, the US acted almost unilaterally in Afghanistan; others followed from behind. What the initial US "unilateralism" meant in terms of NATO's relevance has since been widely debated. Was Washington circumventing the Alliance? Had NATO lost its usefulness for the US? It has since become clear that the US does not intend to undertake this protracted and expensive struggle alone. At NATO's Prague summit of November 2002 , Washington turned to the Alliance and to allies for critical decisions and asked them to be better prepared in terms of concepts, planning, modalities of cooperation and, most importantly, in terms of operational capabilities. Prague has since been named the "transformation summit". NATO has begun to create the force, command structures and military capabilities that will enable swift, effective and sustainable responses to security challenges wherever and whenever necessary. Areas of shortcoming have been identified and allies have been asked to enter into concrete commitments to rectify them, in response to the requirements of a security environment dominated by anxieties about renegade forces with capacity to inflict heavy unconventional damage.

Turkey is approaching these developments in NATO not only in the spirit of a team player and as a strategic partner of the US, but also as a country that is positioned on the frontlines of the evolving security scene.

Turkey has sought to associate itself with the other security organisations in Europe. All institutions in the Euro-Atlantic security architecture can play a useful role in a mutually reinforcing manner. OSCE provides useful tools and a broad forum for addressing issues pertaining to security and promotion of democratic values.

EU has been an important influence in the democratisation and economic reform processes in Europe particularly through the incentive that the prospect of membership provides. The requirement to resolve bilateral

differences among aspiring countries has led to conciliatory attitudes. This is a clear contribution to stability in Europe. (The main deviation has of course been EU's treatment of "Cyprus". Greek Cypriots have been offered membership candidate status regardless of a settlement, as a testimony of the EU's double standard and in total defiance of Turkish expectations).

At the Nice summit in December 2000, the EU agreed on the creation of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). This is meant to become a "sort of" defence component of the EU under the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Its missions have deliberately been confined -at least for the time being- to the Petersberg Tasks of the Western European Union (WEU) and do not entail territorial defence of member countries. Turkey has been supportive of this process, just as we supported WEU. We have offered military assets for the "Headline Goal" (i.e. the so-called European Army), and sought to have our status in WEU recognised in ESDP as well. Our "associate membership" in WEU was based on the principle of "full participation". This entailed inclusion in WEU organs without the right to block decisions. It also entailed the right to participate in the Petersberg Tasks, and the political process that would lead to such operations.

At the Nice summit of EU, the arrangements for the involvement in ESDP of non-EU member European allies turned out to fall considerably short of the WEU "acquis". The principle of "full participation" had been abandoned. This was a contradiction with the spirit and letter of the understanding reached the year before at the Washington Summit of NATO where the Alliance decided to make its operational capabilities available to the EU for ESDP operations. As the EU had failed to deliver its part of the bargain, Turkey blocked work at NATO concerning the implementation of the operational relationship between NATO and ESDP. This led to additional negotiations to improve the modalities of "participation". Hence, the "Ankara Document" was produced which was agreed to by the Turkish Government on December 2001. The EU itself could not reach an agreement because of Greek objections. As a condition of acceptance, Greece thereafter sought to extract safeguards from the EU concerning territorial integrity and external borders of member countries. As this would have amounted to turning ESDP into a defence pact and other EU members rejected it. At its Brussels summit in October 2002, the EU reached agreement on the participation modalities, but deferred a formal decision until NATO reached its own agreements about implementing the strategic relationship with the EU.

In the run up to EU's Copenhagen summit, how to handle "Cyprus" has increasingly become a bone of contention. The position of the Turkish side is that without a settlement, "Cyprus" cannot become a member of the EU, let alone ESDP. If membership takes place on the basis of a settlement and a united island, then the status of the new state with respect to ESDP will have to be determined according to the security arrangements under the comprehensive settlement. Either way, "Cyprus" has no place in a strategic NATO-EU relationship.

Whether or not ESDP should become a proper defence organisation and acquire autonomous capabilities that will reduce dependence on NATO is a constant debate in the EU and NATO alike. Continuation of the impasse in the establishment of a strategic NATO-EU partnership can revive the urge to go "autonomous". Turkey would not be pleased with a process that would weaken the trans-Atlantic link and NATO. Provided that "complementarity" with NATO is observed, Turkey has no qualms about the EU acquiring autonomous capabilities, and is supportive of ESDP on its own merits. Turkey has expressed its interest in having a proper place in ESDP. The rest is in the hands of the EU. If the EU considers Turkey's contribution important, the relationship should fall into place with ease. As far as this author is concerned, it would be a delusion to think that ESDP can afford not to have Turkey on board. However, the EU must treat Turkey as a true partner, and be responsive to issues we consider sensitive. Turkey's role in the relationship cannot be viewed as that of a mercenary.

As the last and outermost of my concentric circles, I would like to touch upon the uniquely universal security organisation, the UN. The role that the UN begun to play during the last decade in terms of international crisis management has acquired a prominence worthy of its "raison d'etre". The UN is no longer functioning under the spectre of arbitrary usage of "veto" power. The Security Council has been able to deal with conflicts in an appropriate way, as the authority that generates legitimacy for use of force. Turkey supports this process. At a time when there is increasing recourse to "coalitions of the willing" in dealing with conflict situations, the legitimacy that the UNSC provides is indispensable. In this context, Turkey has not shied away from assuming responsibility. Turkey is currently undertaking the command of the International Security and Assistance Force" (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and is supportive of the "Enduring Freedom" operation there. Afghanistan is a model for what is required from the international community when it comes to easing the transition to normalcy and state building in areas previously ridden with strife.

Aside from terrorism, there are other security challenges of a universal nature which must be dealt with, such as illegal trafficking of drugs, armaments, even human beings. This sort of trade and terrorism are mutually reinforcing, generating financial resources that can be put to malicious use, as well as creating an employment sector for recruits.

In summary, the new security environment presents the international community with universal challenges which must be addressed with vision, determination, solidarity and cooperation, if we want to leave future generations a better world. As I alluded to in my analysis of concentric circles, a building-blocks approach to security issues, starting at the immediate environment with a view to enhancing mutual understanding, confidence and cooperation, moving on to a wider geo-strategic context through effective use of multilateral mechanisms, thus pursuing active and positive engagement in a geo-strategic continuum is a viable approach. Turkey has the right strategic vision and capacity to bring its useful contribution.

Filename: TPQ-2002-4-Morali.doc
Directory: C:_Turkuaz Marketing\clients_TPQ\archive\TPQ 2002 -
Vol 1\2002 Vol. 1 N.4
Template: C:\Documents and Settings\Eser Turan\Application
Data\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dot
Title: TURKEY'S SECURITY PERSPECTIVES
Subject:
Author: sdurkun
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 11/25/2002 4:03:00 PM
Change Number: 81
Last Saved On: 11/7/2007 1:04:00 PM
Last Saved By: Eser Turan
Total Editing Time: 410 Minutes
Last Printed On: 11/7/2007 1:15:00 PM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 12
Number of Words: 4,507 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 24,700 (approx.)