

TURKEY'S SECURITY CHALLENGES

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In this post-Cold War era, Turkey finds itself neighbouring regional instabilities and uncertainties. While a new European security architecture and, more generally, a new world order is developing, Turkey's vital role in world affairs, played out over the last 70 years, has not declined, as some circles thought it would after the demise of the USSR, but become considerably magnified.

Conflicts in the Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean have brought Turkey to the front line of today's challenges.

THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF TURKEY

Turkey sits in a pentagon with its corners extending to the Balkans, Mediterranean basin, Middle East, Caucasus and beyond to Central Asia, and the Black Sea basin, including the Turkish Straits. This unique geography constitutes one of the most unstable and uncertain areas of the world. Most of the conflicts which are high on the international agenda today are taking place around Turkey. Fully aware of her responsibilities in its region and beyond, Turkey acts together with the world in containing these conflicts. As a pivotal country Turkey strives for the promotion of the rule of law, democracy and free market economics on its periphery.

Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey has achieved an enviable record of economic growth and democratisation and has shown its ability to play an ever-increasing role in geostrategic and geopolitical matters.

TURKEY'S INTEGRATION IN EUROPE

With aspirations to reach the standards of contemporary civilisation, Turkey has found a basic goal in integration with Europe. Turkey's preference in favour of Europe is a political decision with its roots in her past.

A Turkey which is integrated in Europe economically, is socially powerful and stable, would be a bridge that unites the modern values of pluralistic parliamentary democracy, the rule of law and human rights of the West with the East, and would constitute an antidote to the theories of cultural conflict.

Turkey's deep-rooted traditions, dedication to the principle of secularism, and the great strides it has made in implementing a free market economy, coupled with a dynamic population, competitiveness and political weight both in the international and regional arena, place Turkey in the forefront of nations that are seeking EU membership. Entry into customs union with the EU, realised at the beginning of this year, constitutes an important step toward full membership. It is believed that Turkey's full integration into the EU will also be in the best interests of the West.

In fact, the new security architecture in Europe and the world, and the institutionalisation of democratic values, cannot be realised without Turkey's contribution.

Turkey is an associate member of the WEU. In parallel to its efforts to become a full member of the EU, Turkey also strives for the full membership of the WEU.

The whole post-Cold War European security architecture is at stake as NATO, the EU and the WEU grapple with institutional developments and the prospect of enlargement eastwards. In the coming years, these three organisations, particularly NATO, will face decisions of the utmost importance for the future, not only of the Alliance, but also for

European security. The EU's 1996 Inter-Governmental Conference could lead to a redesigned institutional framework for European defence. Our main challenge must be to ensure peace and stability for the whole of Europe while avoiding the establishment of new dividing lines on the continent. Turkey has an undeniable role to play in the formation of a new European security architecture. As we observe a common approach, that of drawing the young democracies of Europe within NATO, the EU and the WEU, a similar stance should be adopted regarding Turkey's full membership of the EU and the WEU.

TURKEY'S BALKAN POLICY

Turkey, as a Balkan country, has close historical, cultural, sociological and geographical ties with the Balkans. The Balkan peninsula is of great importance to Turkey, for it links her with Europe. Turkey has legitimate interests in the arrangements that are being worked out in the area. Turkey has a benevolent, real and important influence in serving the interests of peace and stability in this part of the world. Balkan peace squarely depends on coexistence and cooperation between the Balkan Muslims and their Christian compatriots. The secular option is the way of the future both for Muslim and Christian peoples of the area.

Balkan countries should be included within the integrated structure of Europe. There is a golden opportunity for Europe to embrace all those countries which share its ideals and values. A Turkey integrated with Europe will certainly contribute to the integration of the Balkan countries with Europe.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Since the outbreak of hostilities in the former Yugoslavia, Turkey has insistently called on the international community for the prevention of further atrocities and tragedies, which are the worst committed since World War II. Turkey has always supported the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and urged the finding of a just and lasting solution to the problem.

The situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina changed dramatically last year with the effective and decisive intervention of NATO, as well as the praiseworthy diplomatic peace process initiated by the US, resulting in the Dayton Accord. The most important lesson to be derived from the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict is the fact that expansionist tendencies and aspirations for greater territory will never succeed through aggression. The Turkish thesis since the beginning of the conflict has been validated by the turn of events.

What is now imperative in Bosnia-Herzegovina is adherence to the deadlines and the major parameters of the Dayton Accord. There is also a need to stimulate economic reconstruction and civilian reconciliation in the country. The proper functioning of the Bosnian-Croat federation is also essential.

The concept that the strategic balance among the armed forces of the three belligerents in Bosnia-Herzegovina should be established before IFOR leaves the country is generally shared by the interested parties. Turkey has upgraded its contingent in Bosnia to the brigade level. In addition, there are some Turkish naval and air assets which contribute to the international peace operations. Turkey is committed to participation in the training and equipping of the Bosnian army.

AZERI-ARMENIAN DISPUTE

The Azeri-Armenian dispute remains unresolved with repercussions transcending the boundaries of the countries concerned. The continued occupation of twenty per cent of Azeri territory and the severe conditions of more than one million displaced Azeris urge an immediate solution to the problem. While the simultaneous peace settlements in the Middle East and Bosnia-Herzegovina are on track, the international community should now

concentrate its efforts to solving the Azeri-Armenian dispute. A Nagorno-Karabakh settlement should be found within the framework of the OSCE/Minsk process. Any solution to the problem should take into consideration the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan and the security concerns of the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians.

Armenian withdrawal from the occupied Azeri lands and the return of refugees to their homes would facilitate good neighbourly relations and cooperation between Turkey and Armenia.

THE NEWLY INDEPENDENT CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

Turkey places its relations with the Central Asian countries both in a broad global perspective and in the historical context of its cultural and linguistic ties with them.

Central Asia has historically occupied an important place in international relations because of its geographical location at the crossroads of different cultures and trade routes of Eurasia, its proximity to great world powers and its wealth of natural resources.

Turkey has pursued a comprehensive policy to support these states in their efforts to improve and consolidate their state structures, strengthen their independence, complete their transition to market economics and democracy, and overcome severe economic problems. The international community should also be ready to defend the rights of its new members and help them to consolidate their statehood and independence.

IRAQ/NORTHERN IRAQ

Turkey cooperated with the international coalition during the Gulf War and still remains committed to her obligations. Turkey is also committed to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq which are vital for peace and stability in the area.

The existing vacuum of authority and the consequent struggle for power between the local groups in northern Iraq cause harm to Turkey through connected terrorist activities. Turkey encourages a dialogue between the people of northern Iraq and the Baghdad regime so they may reach a solution to their differences within the context of the Iraqi constitution. The future of Iraq should be decided by all of its people using their fundamental rights and freedoms as good citizens of Iraq.

The UN sanctions imposed on Iraq not only cause pain and difficulties to Iraqis, but also create great economic problems for Turkey which still need to be addressed.

In the light of changes which have occurred since the establishment of Provide Comfort, the status and functions of this force are under review.

THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

The bonds which link Turkey with the peoples of the Middle East are very close. Turkey has warmly welcomed the historic peace agreements concluded so far in the Middle East peace process. However, it is believed that final political success depends on reaching just and viable agreements on all tracks. This would also contribute to the economic and social development of the region.

Turkey follows a balanced policy in the Middle East which recognises the legitimate rights and interests of all parties.

TURCO-GREEK RELATIONS

As is the case with all its neighbours, Turkey wants to maintain good ties with Greece. The present issues between these two countries must be approached from a realistic point of view, free of historical perspectives, prejudices and the emotional atmosphere of the past.

Today's status quo in the Aegean has been established by the Treaty of Lausanne. In relations with Greece, Turkey is resolved to oppose any fait accompli that would damage its national interests and security.

So long as problems between the two countries remain unresolved, a minor incident could escalate into conflict. Therefore, a direct or indirect dialogue with an open agenda seems to be the best mechanism for settling the extremely complex and interrelated issues between two countries.

CYPRUS

The Cyprus problem has arisen as a result of the unilateral abrogation of the constitutional order by the Greek Cypriots in 1963. Turkey was compelled to intervene in Cyprus in 1974, following a coup d'état staged by the Greek side. Turkey's intervention was undertaken in accordance with its rights and obligations under the Treaty of Guarantee of 1960.

The bi-communal negotiations initiated under the UN Secretary-General's good offices mission envision a solution on the basis of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federal structure and political equality and equal sovereignty.

The 1960 international treaties do not allow Cyprus to become a party to an economic or political union to which Turkey is not a party. Therefore, Turkey is against Cyprus's unilateral inclusion into the EU.

If a compromise can be reached on the basic issues of sovereignty and political equality, the conditions of Cypriot membership of the EU could be separately negotiated within the UN negotiation process.

The confidence building measures in the island have critical importance as a prelude to a settlement.

The Turkey-Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) joint declaration of 1995 emphasised that the necessary measures would be taken against the growing military escalation on the Greek side and that the security of the TRNC would continue to be ensured even after a possible solution. Turkey cannot remain indifferent to Greek attempts to alter the sensitive balance in the Eastern Mediterranean.

TERRORISM

Turkey has, for more than ten years, been struggling with terrorist activities directed against its indivisible territorial integrity. Terrorism is not justified under any circumstances. Turkey continues to call upon the international community to stand by its commitments and to take all necessary steps to combat and eradicate terrorism.

Turkey's fight against terrorist activities is considered a national responsibility and takes place on a completely legal platform. Terrorists, unfortunately, are being provided with a safe haven by some of Turkey's neighbours. Turkey is trying to pursue the struggle against terrorism without harming its citizens and by remaining within the rule of law. The protection and safeguarding of the unitary nature of Turkey are essential.

TURKISH NATIONAL SECURITY

Even in a constantly changing international situation Turkey's national security objectives remain intact: protect the freedom, independence and integrity of the country; maintain the principles and values established by the constitution; promote the welfare and security of the nation; develop the economy in and out of the country; further friendly relations and alliances with other countries and create an environment of peace and stability around Turkey, based on human rights, democracy and free market economics.

Although ideological divisions and the global threat of the Cold War are over, our common security is yet hostage to existent or potential ethno-political conflicts and armed aggression. Therefore, we must be vigilant to emerging risks to peace and prosperity.

TURKISH ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Turkey is rapidly moving ahead in becoming a democratic, wealthy, powerful, contemporary and great country. Turkey wants to reach the contemporary level of development pointed out by her eternal leader, Atatürk, and become an honourable partner in her international relations. Turkey desires a better standard of living for all of its citizens. Full EU membership is the best way to achieve this. Now Turkey will make every effort for full EU membership which will be beneficial for all.