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MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY IN THE LIGHT OF TURKISH CONCERNS*

İLTER TURAN

İlter Turan is Professor of International Relations at Koç University, Istanbul.

INTRODUCTION

The content of Mediterranean security has varied both in time and space. In the days of the bipolar world and the Cold War, the definition and the content of Mediterranean security appeared to be relatively easy to establish. The Soviet Union was perceived to be the major security concern. Mediterranean security was simply preventing the Soviets from establishing a dominant position as an ideological or a military power in the Mediterranean basin. Nowadays, the days of 'hard security' problems are thought to be behind us. Simultaneously, Mediterranean countries are faced with a number of problems which have come to be summarily referred to as 'soft security' concerns.

Understandably, one of the current major concerns is overcoming economic stagnation, achieving economic development, growth and prosperity. To achieve that end, all countries of the region have begun to search for new forms of economic co-operation. Turkey, for its part, has led the way by the establishment of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation and has manifested renewed interest in developing ties with the newly independent countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

A second area of concern, not unrelated to the first, has been the growing mobility of populations from the economically more deprived to the economically more prosperous regions. Apart from the fact that such movements contribute to the worsening of the problems of unemployment among the more prosperous, the presence of cultural and religious differences between the local and the immigrant populations also brings about occasional rioting and other similar public disorders. The construction of a variety of barriers by the more prosperous northern Mediterranean countries to control the movements of populations, on the other hand, tend to stand in the way of one of the major beneficial outcomes of the easing of tensions between the Western and Soviet blocs: closer relations and interactions among the countries of the Mediterranean basin.

The emergence of religiously based socio-political movements, often referred to as the rise of 'Fundamentalist Islam', has constituted a third area of concern. It is feared that religiously based social movements which currently challenge the political order of some societies on the southern and eastern rim of the Mediterranean will, in the future, not only work to export their activities to countries which do not have them, thereby threatening the latter's space and tranquillity, but also carry the potential of initiating action which will lead to the outbreak of hostilities between neighbouring countries each of which feels threatened, , by the political extremism prevalent in others in addition to that which it may already encounter at home.

Together with those already mentioned, other soft security concerns such as the illicit drug trade and environmental pollution, constitute a soft security concerns package with which countries of the Mediterranean have tried to cope. In doing this, both the recently developed and the previously existing instruments of international co-operation, including the United Nations and the OSCE, are used. There is a general optimism that war is no longer likely to constitute the means of settling differences in the Mediterranean area in the foreseeable future, and that organisations and behaviour based on the previously existing hard security environment are no longer appropriate under the new conditions. Yet, there are some harsh reminders that hard security concerns have not totally disappeared from the scene. The wars in the Gulf and Bosnia are telling examples that we

have legitimate reasons for being concerned about security in the more traditional sense. Armed conflicts which threaten the security of all or some Mediterranean countries may erupt on short notice and catch all unprepared.

TURKEY, NATO AND MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY

When Turkey looks at the Mediterranean basin with security as the guiding concept, it perceives a situation which diverges in major ways from the relaxed security mood which characterises the Maghreb and the EU member-countries located at the western end of the Mediterranean. To begin with, although recognising that some soft security concerns have assumed new importance, Turkey feels there continues to exist some major hard security concerns in the region. Second, partly owing to its location, partly to its history and partly to its cultural, social and economic linkages, Turkey views Mediterranean security as part of a set of interconnected security concerns which include the Caucuses, Central Asia, the Balkans and the Middle East. Finally, Turkey has some unique security concerns which have implications for Mediterranean security.

Since the early 1950s, Turkey has been integrated with the Atlantic security system. During the bipolar period, NATO constituted a critical and indispensable alliance in ensuring the security of Turkey. Ironically, as long as the Warsaw Pact constituted NATO's main adversary, the stability of relations both within the socialist alliance and between it and the Western Alliance were ensured. The breakdown of the Warsaw Pact and the demise of the Soviet Union set loose forces of instability in regions surrounding Turkey. This, of course, is not to deny that the disappearance of the bipolar system has, in fact, also produced certain outcomes which are beneficial to Turkey. To cite a few instances, the Turkish Straits are relieved of the pressures of the Soviet Escadra (fleet) these days. The possibility of marine landings on the Turkish Black Sea Coast to secure the Turkish Straits and moves by land forces on Turkey's eastern borders have become remote. New economic opportunities have opened up for Turkey in Russia, the countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It is nevertheless true, that Turkey's immediate environment is now more volatile and less predictable than at the time of the bipolar system.

European Security Attention Moves Away From Turkey

In the mood of euphoria which accompanied the end of the bipolar world, European attention turned to other pressing concerns. There was major drug trafficking into Western Europe, unauthorised immigration was swelling, 'Islamic fundamentalism' appeared to be on the rise, pollution was climbing, terrorism threatened innocent people. As attention turned to addressing problems at hand, some European Union and NATO members began to think that Turkey's role as a strategic ally was no longer important. For example, Germany achieved its long-term dream of unification. Countries such as Poland and Ukraine now enjoyed greater independence from Moscow such that they could serve as buffer states between Germany and Russia. Thus, Germany turned to the realisation of its life-long dream of reconstructing its hegemony over Eastern Europe. Turkey had played an important diversionary function for the Warsaw Pact forces which were deployed for the most part, against the Federal Republic. But, with the Russians gone and no longer constituting a military threat, at least in the foreseeable future, in the German eyes, Turkey was no longer as important strategically as it had been earlier.

Germany was not alone in changing its disposition toward Turkey. Turkey presented an enigma to the European Union in general. In its efforts to develop a defence and foreign policy identity, for example, the EU had chosen to revive the Western European Union, an organisation which many had come to view as having been stillborn in 1954. The WEU was revived, however, to be made the defence organisation of the Union. It was thought that the WEU could serve as the European partner of NATO. The two organisations would plan a European defence together, and the former would utilise facilities in discharging its own responsibilities. But, not all European partners of NATO, including Turkey, were simultaneously members of the EU. This lack of congruence of membership brought with it the question of how to deal with Turkey since its contribution to European security and defence could be dispensed with, without putting the entire alliance system at risk. A middle

way, not to the full satisfaction of the Turks, was devised which gave Turkey all privileges and participation in the activities of the WEU without having the right to vote.

The changing evaluation of security needs rendered the members of the EU less sensitive to and less understanding of Turkish domestic and international problems. For example, Turkey's handling of ethnically based terrorist activities in southeastern Turkey is nowadays heavily criticised. At the time of the bipolar world, European reactions to Turkey's policies in dealing with domestic problems were more muted and less critical. Similarly, in viewing Turkey's multifarious problems with Greece in the Aegean and on Cyprus, currently the members of the EU are far more supportive of Greek positions and demands than those of Turkey in comparison to bipolar times when care was taken to employ more balanced approaches.

Persistence of Hard Security Concerns in the Mediterranean

As European attention began to turn away from hard security concerns having a direct or indirect bearing on overall Mediterranean security, there emerged a number of situations such as the Gulf War and the Bosnian crisis which would effect the security of the eastern Mediterranean. Other possibilities such as the outbreak of hostilities between Israel and Syria or between Azerbaijan and Armenia continued to loom. These contingencies, strictly speaking, are not NATO concerns, nor do they present an immediate threat to the security of the western Mediterranean. They are, however, of great concern to Turkey. First, each conflict carries the potential that Turkey will be asked to make some kind of contribution to its resolution, such as making some facilities available to other military forces, or making force contributions to some international operation. Second, each of these carry with it the potential of escalation which might bring Turkey in. Another Middle Eastern conflict initiated by Iraqi actions, a new Arab-Israeli conflict and conflicts in the Caucuses, are all examples of such possibilities. Third, each of these contingencies are likely to produce other soft security problems such as a new wave of immigrants or a re-invigoration of terrorist movements.

These security contingencies are exacerbated by the fact that there are no specific institutional structures whose responsibility it is to deal with them. Almost all of them are out-of-area concerns for NATO. The United Nations, to which the world community tends to turn for solutions, have so far proven not particularly capable of producing effective solutions. Similarly, the OSCE is simply too loose an arrangement to produce quick and effective responses to crises. The European Union (including the WEU) and NATO, so far, have not been able to produce concerted action in dealing with emergencies that threaten international security including those in the Mediterranean region. The EU wants to develop its own defence identity. Since historically the defence of western Europe was provided by NATO under powerful American military and strategic leadership, the only way a new European defence identity may emerge is by challenging the leadership of the United States and adopting European positions which diverge from those recommended by the former. The EU, on the other hand, harbours a sufficient number of international differences such that it cannot produce effective policy responses to security related issues.

Turkey Feels that the EU Avoids Addressing Hard Security Issues

There is a widely shared feeling in the Turkish foreign policy and security community that the EU cannot be relied on for dealing with hard security concerns. EU thinking is often judged as based on short-term tactical considerations. Furthermore, it is felt that there is an unwillingness on the part of each member to bear the costs of security. Each member tries to free ride on the others, and all try to pass the costs of hard security to the United States. The EU has a proclivity to reduce all security concerns, either deliberately or unconsciously, to soft security concerns, and almost instinctively to avoid conceptualising any security matter as being one of hard security. And finally, the EU is unable to conceptualise security in global terms; that is, its outlook in the understanding of security matters is highly parochial.

Discounting the EU as a reliable partner in addressing hard security issues (including those that have a bearing on the security of the Mediterranean), Turkey has adopted a three tract approach to coping with security challenges. First, it tries to co-operate with willing or interested allies within

the framework of NATO. Turkey's willingness to extend co-operation to allied forces operating under UN auspices in the Gulf War is one example of this approach, sending patrol planes to fly over Bosnia is another. A second approach entails forging other security links in the region. Recent military co-operation with Israel is a manifestation of this. A third approach comprises being open to and joining efforts intended to reduce tensions so that the need for hard security concerns is mitigated. This is exemplified in Turkey's making facilities available for the implementation of Operation Provide Comfort.

MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY AS PART OF A GREATER SECURITY SYSTEM

Turkish strategic analysts see Mediterranean security as part of a greater security concern comprised of, in addition to the Mediterranean basin, the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Middle East and the Balkans. Let us begin by examining the linkages between the security of Central Asia and the Caucasus and the Mediterranean, then turn our attention on to the Middle East and the Balkans.

Security of Energy Supplies

It is now known that Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan possess large deposits of oil and natural gas. The estimates of reserves, which were modest when these countries were first opened to exploration, are being revised upwards regularly. The appearance of this new source of energy is important in ensuring that sufficient quantities of energy are made available to the industrial countries of the world at reasonable and stable prices. The shipment of early Azeri oil to the world markets through Novorossisk on the Black Sea coast of Russia through the Turkish Straits and the Mediterranean has already commenced.

It is by now established that the most likely routes for the shipment of oil and gas to world markets will go directly or indirectly through Turkey. One possible shipment route of oil is the expansion of the currently employed combination of pipelines from Baku to Novorossisk and then oil tankers from Novorossisk, that will sail through the Turkish Straits and the Aegean. A similar possibility, in which the pipeline would run to the Georgian Black Sea port of Supsa, has also been studied.

The delivery of the oil to some Black Sea port to be loaded on tankers is constrained by the fact that the Turkish Straits are narrow bodies of water marked by swift and unpredictable currents. These natural constraints are compounded by the fact that the city of Istanbul stretches on both sides of the Bosphorus, and is exposed to grave dangers of major fires and an environmental disaster in the face of growing tanker traffic through the Straits. Therefore, some modification of these two routes have also been talked about. The first variant is to have the tankers to bring the oil from Novorossisk or Supsa to the Turkish Black Sea coast of Samsun and ship it via a pipeline that traverses Turkey, terminating in Yumurtalik where the Kirkuk line from Iraq already terminates at a tanker loading facility. A second variant proposes to carry the oil by tankers to the Bulgarian port of Burgas, then unloading it to a pipeline through Bulgaria and Greece, running into the Aegean at Alexandroupolis.

Oil shipment routes by land to the Mediterranean envision pipelines crossing Azerbaijan-Georgia, Azerbaijan-Armenia or Azerbaijan-Iran into Turkey. Of these, the Iranian route does not appear to be feasible at the moment because of strong American objections to co-operating with Iran in ways which would strengthen that country economically or legitimise its regime as a respected partner in the international system. But there is an even more convincing reason as to why shipment through Iran may be less than preferable as a possible route for oil shipment. Iran is part of the Middle East oil supply system. Oil from the Caucasus and Central Asia may be treated as an independent source of energy only to the extent that it can be delivered to world markets independently of the Middle East and Russian oil-supply systems. Whereas the political constraint deriving from the American-led embargo on Iran may change at some future date, the preference for a delivery system independent of the Middle East oil supply system will always be there. That is why a pipeline that crosses Iran into the Gulf has so far not been entertained as a serious option although there may be some convenience and economy to using that route.

The shipment of natural gas from Turkmenistan and possibly Kazakhstan is also intended to go through Turkey to Europe. In the case of the Turkmen gas, Turkey is also to be one of the main consumers of this resource. Two feasibility studies of pipelines, one going through Iran and another crossing the Caspian under water and then going through Azerbaijan, are currently under way. There is discussion that gas from Kazakh fields could also be linked with this pipeline for shipments to Western Europe. Similar to the shipment of oil, options involving Iran are constrained by American objections. Also, as with the shipment of oil, the idea that this source should be independent of the control of the current suppliers of the commodity, constitutes an additional consideration which tends to work against Iran.

It cannot but be recognised immediately that oil and gas shipments generate hard and soft security concerns for all countries which are producers, consumers or which are one way or another involved in the delivery of the resource to international markets. The soft security concerns that such transportation will generate are reasonably well known. Large oil tankers are accident prone, creating grave environmental dangers on routes that they traverse. The more dangerous the routes, such as through the Turkish Straits, the greater the likelihood that environmental disasters such as oil spills and major fires will occur. Pipelines, on the other hand, in addition to accidents, are open to terrorist raids. The territories through which they pass are exposed to domestic and international instability. The current occupation of 25 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan by Armenia is a powerful example of a dormant conflict of an international nature. The ethnic disturbances which become manifest on occasion in all countries of the Caucasus including the Russian Federation, on the other hand, remind us of the tenuous domestic peace which prevails in many of these countries. There is also a major hard security concern: sea lanes must be kept open and loading facilities must be protected against potential military aggression and such protection has to be planned for; it is not instantaneously available. This requires addressing security questions and taking measures to meet security contingencies.

It appears to me to be only too evident that the shipments of energy fuels constitute an integral part of Mediterranean security as much as they are security concerns for the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Oil is to be shipped through the Mediterranean, and countries of the Mediterranean will be among the consumers of this oil. Furthermore, the more industrialised countries of the Mediterranean basin may look forward to the expansion of their exports to the Caucasus and the Central Asian regions as sales of oil and gas begin to generate increasing sums of income much of which will inevitably go to the purchase of consumer, intermediate or capital goods abroad.

Security Questions in the Middle East

If we turn to the Middle East, two major security questions continue to present challenges which will effect Mediterranean security: the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the security of the Persian Gulf. In the case of the former, the ability to retain a commitment to the peaceful resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflicts is seen to depend on the ability of the United States (and to the extent it shows some interest and would like to assume a more active role, the EU) to convince the parties that peace will produce dividends for all. In the broader Arab-Israeli conflict, on the other hand, success depends on America's (and the EU's?) ability to extend support to the moderate states and to isolate those who are often referred to as the rejection front. The failure of the peace process tends to undermine not only the standing of the moderate Arab states in the Arab world, but also weakens the already tenuous legitimacy many enjoy in the eyes of their own citizens. Furthermore, the ensuing instability helps reduce economic prosperity, initiating a vicious cycle in which political instability breeds insecurity which in turn reduces economic prosperity which then leads to further instability. Either the possibility of armed conflict between some of the Arab states and Israel, which does not preclude the possibility of the use of even nuclear weapons, or major domestic turmoil in such countries as Egypt, Syria and Jordan, would generate security problems for the Mediterranean basin which are too evident to elaborate and too important to be ignored.

The security of the Gulf, on the other hand, concerns Mediterranean security, both directly and indirectly. Some concerns are direct. For example, part of the military capability to be used in an armed conflict is ordinarily deployed in the eastern Mediterranean. Some logistic support for operations in the Gulf is extended through the Mediterranean. The possibility that an escalation would bring some of the countries of the eastern Mediterranean into the conflict looms large. Other concerns are indirect. A conflagration in the Gulf tends to destabilise countries like Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan in a number of ways which are not very different from the effects which the Palestinian- (or Arab-)Israeli conflict would produce.

Balkan Security

Currently, the Balkans constitute the most immediate security concern in the Mediterranean. The Kosovo region of Serbia, with a 90 per cent Albanian population harbouring ethno-cultural aspirations which the Serbian government has chosen to suppress totally, continues to be an ethnic powder-keg. Macedonia holds together a society owing mainly to its unusually skilled but ageing leader Kiro Gligorov who has already survived an assassination attempt. What will happen after Gligorov is a question to which no one can venture an answer at this time. Domestic peace in Albania appears to have been restored but it will take a long time before Albania can be characterised as a stable society marked by domestic peace and tranquillity. And finally, the peace in Bosnia is at best tenuous and it is not certain as to how long it can be retained since there is not sufficient evidence that all parties accept the existing arrangement as a permanent one.

In achieving peace in the Balkans (which Turkey treats as being of great importance since the region is the land access route of Turkey to Western Europe), the European Union has not demonstrated itself to be capable of assuming any kind of leadership in addressing the Bosnian conflict. That responsibility was left, in the end, to the United States which has assumed world leadership by itself as the EU defaulted on even matters which are of greatest importance to it.

Turkish Security Concerns

In addition to sharing common security concerns with other Mediterranean countries, Turkey has its own security concerns mainly deriving from a conundrum of disagreements with Greece. To begin with, the Aegean constitutes a main sea lane of Northern Turkey to the Mediterranean. Turkey would like to keep this lane open as international waters. Turkey has insisted that this particular waterway, specked with innumerable islands, does not lend itself to the application of the 12 mile territorial waters limit. If applied, the UN Convention on Law of the Sea 12-mile limit would turn the sea into a Greek lake, an outcome which Turkey finds unacceptable. Any Greek action which attempts to introduce a 12 mile limit will be countered, if need be, by military measures.

Second, Turkey feels its security is threatened by the militarisation of the Greek islands facing the Turkish coast, contrary to the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty, the peace treaty which Turkey signed with the Allies after the Turkish War of National Independence. The Greek insistence that it is within their right to apply the 12 mile limit in the Aegean any time that they deem appropriate and its militarisation of the islands have undermined mutual confidence such that other issues pertaining to the Aegean have also been elevated to major disagreements. These include the conflicts regarding the delineation of the continental shelf and the delineation of air space as well as others.

Third, Greek attempts to unite Cyprus with Greece and to eliminate the Turkish community on the island by violence, has prompted Turkey to intervene on the island. Since that time, it has not proven possible to reach a modus vivendi that recognises the Turkish part of Cyprus as a fully equal component of a united Cyprus. The two states on the island have moved further and further apart. The decision of the Greek government to open new airbases and to purchase S-300 surface to air missiles from the Russian Federation have served to heighten tensions and brought back the possibility of pre-emptive strikes on the part of Turkey.

The partiality of the EU to Greek positions has made reaching a solution on the problems between Greece and Turkey most difficult. At the time of Greek accession to what was then the EEC, Greece had committed itself to not bringing Turco-Greek problems into the Community. This has all changed now, such that Greek viewpoints and policies have become those of the EU. Such uniformity of position, a rare achievement for the EU which is not noted for achieving unity on questions of external policy, is producing the opposite of what it was intended to produce. The isle of Cyprus is much closer to being divided than ever before. Turkish-Greek relations are worsening. While a fully fledged conflict is not wanted by either side, accidents and consequent escalation of hostilities appear more likely these days than ever before.

CONCLUSION

Turkish perceptions that Mediterranean security is not isolated from other major security concerns has led it to search for linkages that would contribute to the achievement of overall security in the inter-regional nexus with Turkey located at its centre. The recent understanding reached with the United States to pursue strategic co-operation, and growing relations with Israel which culminated in a joint rescue exercise, can best be understood in this light.

Turkey feels that it is exposed to hard security risks in its region which includes the eastern Mediterranean. It is very likely that North African countries do not judge that they are encountering major hard security risks at this time. Hard security necessitates relationships of a more comprehensive and predictable nature, based on higher levels of confidence. Hard security also necessitates higher levels of commitment to both relationships and policies. It may be easy to change policies on matters pertaining to soft risks. It is much more difficult and often impossible to re-equip armies or train defence forces, modify strategic concepts and reorganise force deployments very quickly.

European Union-Mediterranean Co-operation is an interesting attempt to further relations between the Union and a neighbouring region with which some members have strong historical ties. Yet, I am tempted to be reminded of the well known English expression that 'beauty is in the eyes of the beholder.' I say this because I am not convinced that the countries in the southern and eastern Mediterranean quite constitute the integrated whole which the EU would like to see. I am even more convinced that these countries do not constitute a security community. Therefore, I must conclude that such co-operation would not meet the security concerns of Turkey in any substantial way. This is not to say that Turkey is not supportive of the effort. My impression is that Turkey would welcome and support any effort that would enhance co-operation, prosperity and peace around the Mediterranean. The effort of the EU to reach out to its Mediterranean neighbours is no exception.

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