

TURKEY AND THE WEST

ARTHUR CYR

DISTINCTIVE POWER, RELIABLE ALLY

Turkey remains distinctive in several respects from the perspective of American foreign policy. First, the nation is one of the most faithful and reliable allies. The large number of Turkish as well as American graves at the special United Nations cemetery at Pusan in South Korea, a moving legacy of fighting together to defend that nation during the 1950-1953 Korean War, are among the most dramatic testimonies available for that fact. More recently, Turkey stood with the United States and other UN forces in the coalition which drove Iraq out of Kuwait in early 1991.

Secondly, Turkey is at a geopolitical crossroads, now as it was in the past. Turkey, rightly, is both a traditional great power and one with a pivotal role in the contemporary fluid international system; she holds control of the straits linking the Black and Mediterranean seas, is located at the southern end of a region which has known almost constant tension and strife since the Crimean War of the mid-nineteenth century and has a powerful national military tradition. At the same time, the end of the Cold War provides an incentive to move beyond the Western tendency to view Turkey, at times in an off-hand manner, as simply a buffer and barrier against possible expansion by the Soviet Union.

Thirdly, Turkey is at a religious and cultural crossroads as well, blending Christian and Moslem populations, at the border of the Judaeo-Christian West and the Moslem East. Turkey is confronted with a changing national population pattern at the same time that the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and associated movements and immigration from Islamic nations to Europe is generating political concern and social tension in the West.

Turkey continues to occupy a pivotal role of a very traditional sort at the same time that the international system has been undergoing dramatic change, especially in the context of Europe. The end of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union and their respective allies has brought to a conclusion one of the very great international competitions of history and the defining conflict of international relations after World War II. The Cold War was very important because the conflict took place in several fundamental dimensions, each reinforcing the other. The conflict was all at once ideological in pitting communism against Western liberalism, economic in the contrast between two systems of organisation of society for production and distribution, strategic in the competition for influence and position in Central Europe and the Third World, military at both the nuclear and conventional levels, and diplomatic in mobilising these resources and others in jockeying for position and advantage.

With the end of the Cold War, European powers including Turkey, were suddenly confronted with a much more fluid environment, and the consequent opportunity for movement and flexibility in diplomacy that has not been seen in the region since the nineteenth century. At the same time, both the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the European Union, the principal regional organisations, continue to exist, and indeed the role of NATO has ironically been strengthened as a result of successful intervention under American leadership in the Balkans for peacekeeping in Bosnia. A fresh evaluation of Turkey's potential role in Europe must be done in the context of both these successful institutional mechanisms.

STRUCTURE OF THE ALLIANCE

The end of the Cold War might also have ended the NATO alliance, but rather surprisingly that has not proven to be the case. The Alliance has survived both the collapse of the great power which it was formed to oppose, and a series of disruptive, depressing and generally frustrating crises which also might reasonably have been expected to lead to its demise.

The NATO treaty, ironically, nowhere mentions the Soviet Union, though perceptions of Soviet expansionism and threat to Western Europe after World War II were what led to the formation of the Alliance. The treaty simply states that an attack against one member will be interpreted as an attack against all. Yet, the Soviet Union's perceived goals of domination and expansion were the reasons for the very formation of NATO. Habits of co-operation have apparently become so firmly established that the perimeter is maintained, albeit with reduced forces, even though the enemy is gone.

The secret of NATO's durability has little to do with the specific treaty document. Henry Kissinger was notable during his scholarly career for criticising the impractical influence of legalism on American foreign policy process. Once in office himself, he never confused paper with power. Certainly, American behaviour during the early phase of the Cold War, and to some extent later, provides evidence for Kissinger's thesis, and NATO, as a 'contract' among partners engaged in the 'business' of opposing communism, became a document of central importance to those disposed to such attitudes. Faced with the success of NATO in providing cohesion and strength against the Soviet bloc, secretary of state John Foster Dulles, spent a great deal of time during the Eisenhower administration in a singular effort to reproduce NATO around the world, literally "ringing" the Communist camp with a variety of similar treaty arrangements. Relentless in purpose, endlessly energetic, driven as only the righteous can be, Dulles was effective in achieving accords on paper, the lawyer's tangible measure of success in the commercial world; yet these understandings did not have a lasting impact on the structures or practices of international relations, the diplomat's measure of ultimate success in the political world. The result was treaties—the Central Treaty Organization in the Middle East, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization in Asia—which had no meaning or impact outside the files containing them, joined no general interests in the real world, and are today justifiably forgotten. Dulles' efforts may have been one factor encouraging the US to use force outside of Europe, in particular in Vietnam, though even this is highly uncertain; during the Eisenhower years, the secretary of state's personal activism coexisted with the president's notable caution and particular reluctance to undertake armed combat.

Early in the existence of NATO, an elaborate organisational structure was created. Justified no doubt by the large size of the Alliance and the challenge of maintaining cohesion among so many different national cultures, the approach was also very characteristic of the American disposition to handling military affairs. In modern times, an exceptionally large percentage of US forces have been devoted to non-combat, administrative functions. The reality of substantial bureaucracy probably has been one factor in the durability of NATO, the tendency of such institutions to be self-perpetuating reinforced by now, well established habits of consultation among national militaries of the members.

The main source of strength of NATO is not specific documentary language, or even an ongoing bureaucracy, but the broad identity of national interests and purposes of the participants. Early on, NATO also had the good fortune to become defined in narrow terms, making the alliance less likely to be undercut by members finding themselves at cross purposes in third areas of the globe. In 1954, the French found their colonial position in Indochina becoming untenable. A range of forts had been overrun, and the revolutionary Viet Minh forces under Ho Chi Minh were moving towards victory.

President Eisenhower, always reluctant to use force, characteristically anxious to avoid a head-on confrontation, responded in constitutional and institutional terms. He argued that he could accept the French plea for military action only if congressional leaders concurred and at least one other major NATO partner, meaning Britain, would co-operate. House Speaker Sam Rayburn, and ironically in light of later events, Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson were against using force. The British wanted no part of the French disaster. Direct American military intervention was not forthcoming. Not many noted at the time or afterwards that President Eisenhower had imposed a narrow 'strict constructionist' interpretation on the NATO treaty. In the future, NATO would be explicitly invoked on behalf of European territory of the partners, not their colonies or clients elsewhere in the world. Thanks to Eisenhower's restraint, and the manner in which the decision was made,

the European allies had a comparatively easy time rejecting efforts by President Lyndon Johnson and his secretary of state to enlist their direct assistance in the Americans' Vietnam war of the 1960s. The end of the Cold War opens the new question of the degree to which the Alliance can and should become involved in European disputes beyond such immediate defence of members' real estate.

Specifically, the Alliance confronts the issue of expansion of membership, with the debate defined in terms currently of the American Partnership for Peace proposal. The Partnership, eminently pragmatic, attempts to provide both a reaffirmation of the importance of the NATO alliance while opening the door to partial and more informal co-operation by selected East European states that are both capable of and comfortable with such involvement. The Russian government, amidst the enormous political and economic uncertainties confronting that nation, and following threats and complaints about the expansion of the Alliance through 1994, has nevertheless recently agreed to closer co-operation with NATO as well, a step which must be viewed as a major concession given endemic suspicion of any East European involvement in what is fundamentally a West European, and North American military organisation. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland especially all have strong ties with the West, and have governments and histories that should be relatively congenial to continued democracy and the related requisite civilian control of the military; a statement that can hardly be made about other parts of Eastern Europe.

Much less encouraging until recently has been NATO experience in promoting humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping in southeastern Europe. Here, the NATO relationships have been strained, though not yet broken, as a result of actual involvement in a war zone, occasional combat, and the cleavages between alliance partners on how best to manage the challenge. There is no easy way to see how the Alliance could have avoided the morass of the Balkans or disagreement and tension among the partners once involved. Given the very long history of bitter conflict in the area, with religious cleavages reinforcing ethnic divisions and profound historical memories of violence, the surprising fact is not that war broke out after the Cold War, but that reasonable stability among such divided populations was maintained for a time after the World War II. NATO provides an obvious and proximate regional military instrument. History teaches that instability in the Balkans threatens to expand into wider conflict in Europe, which would probably have been a sufficient incentive for intervention. Atrocities and more general human suffering provided a spur that Western nations could not ignore.

The strongest criticism that can be made of the intervention is that the rules of engagement, meaning really the purpose of the employment of military forces, were not laid out clearly at the outset. Perhaps this was not a practical goal, given the complexities of the conflict and the strength of pressure to intervene. Much of the criticism of the exercise reflects the comfort of not having to engage directly in pressured decisions involving considerable lack of information. However, there is a difference between protecting supply columns providing humanitarian relief, and trying very actively to separate the combatants; the fact remains that what was initially an effort to undertake the former, expanded step by step to include the latter. Explicitly opposing Serbian military advances meant effectively taking sides in the war. Critics on the sidelines have argued that there should have been a strictly limited goal of protecting a few identified safe havens from Serbian attack, thereby providing cover for and assistance to refugees. This became the de facto policy of the UN forces in the area, only to find the Serb forces easily overcame such "safe" areas when they chose. The UN effort was saved to some extent by the capacity of the Croats to mount effective counterattacks in the summer of 1995, though the credibility of the world organisation for even limited humanitarian interventions in future has been eroded.

In retrospect—always very clear—the UN would have been well advised to limit intervention efforts only to humanitarian relief assistance. Lack of commitment to combat for protection of the existing safe havens means that approach would have been better avoided entirely. Above all, the experience demonstrates that the UN is not an appropriate

organisation for detailed management of any war or for active intervention except in cases of clear-cut aggression, such as Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, or peacekeeping where all parties are agreed on the presence and legitimacy of the UN.

Yet the Balkan experience so far has also demonstrated that the NATO alliance can survive armed conflict, including differences of opinion among the participants, even in the region of Europe, and provide the means to police any agreement reached with American leadership. The fact that the organisation persists, and East European nations want to join, demonstrates a viable future. The fact that the Balkan War created such tensions within NATO, despite the consensus on the need for humanitarian relief, indicates that the Alliance should be cautious about undertaking any formal commitment to intervene in conflicts elsewhere. Nevertheless, NATO survives and there is no practical organisational alternative available. The UN, European Union, Western European Union, Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe—renamed the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as of January 1995—and other possible institutional mechanisms have either been too cautious and bureaucratic to succeed, or too marginal and abstract even to be employed.

European Union and disunion

Much of the history of the European Union has been defined in terms of attempting to resolve, or resolving to live with, a fundamental tension between those who wish to see the nation state subsumed in a larger supra-national order, and those who do not. Even individuals who agree in general on the goal of greater integration of Europe are divided over particular policies and approaches. The movement for European unification over time has been curious and deceptive because it is so indirect like a flirtation or complicated dance, in which both partners engage in elaborate ritual, with some moves apparent only to the participants and not to the wider audience.

Europe, after the World War II, was devastated spiritually and emotionally as well as economically and physically, and the US was both enormously self-confident with new-found global power and enormously troubled by the great ordeal just ended. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, Germany had begun to overshadow Great Britain as the capital of scientific and technical research, to rival the other nation in more general scholarly and educational activity, and had become the principal industrial power of Europe in terms of productive growth. Germany, a nation of extraordinary positive accomplishment had, by 1945, been reduced to a devastated pariah, a remnant of a state; the horrors inflicted on the region of Europe only becoming fully apparent after the unconditional surrender of the Nazi regime.

For thoughtful people, especially Europeans who had suffered from the world wars at first hand, the incentives for some sort of basic political reform to prevent a third cataclysm were obvious. This, far more than any positive visionary notions of human unity, provided the very practical incentive to try to reduce the likelihood of war between nations by combining them in a web of self-reinforcing economic interests. Nationalism had been fed by the Nazis providing both fuel and justification for their initial territorial grabs and later genocidal crimes. Nationalism had been a principal cause of the World War I. Nationalism was the bane of modern diplomacy and international stability, and reducing the importance of national unity could reasonably be defended as a goal which would in turn reduce the likelihood of a general war. After all, the establishment of the UN, generally accepted by major Allied nations even before the end of the World War II, was motivated by these sorts of sentiment.

The nation-state, however, has been a tough, enduring entity. Hence Jean Monnet and the other planners of European supra-nationalism decided on the indirect approach to achieve their goal. The legitimacy of the state would not be attacked head-on; rather, a set of technical goals would be outlined, economic incentives would be used to open the regional market and encourage nation-states to band together for the sake of growth and

prosperity, and in the process, diluting the importance and ultimately the meaning of national boundaries.

The most recent milestone for the Community was the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, which provided the basis for full market integration of the renamed European Union at the end of the following year. Maastricht was in some ways a typical Community production, with considerable emphasis on administrative detail, numerous public speeches and debates as well as press releases, much private negotiating, broad ambitions, and in the end although limited, in this case, also important practical gains. The Treaty was extremely successful in providing the impetus for dissolving the remaining barriers to commerce across borders in Europe, a considerable achievement given delays of transport at national checkpoints and other such practical impediments to the smooth flow of commerce. The cumulative effect of this full market integration will be in these terms, allowing economies of scale virtually free rein, making life easier in particular for very large multinational corporations, which are, as a result, further enabled to place plants in and direct other investments to locations of maximum economic advantage, without much attention being required for remaining national distortions and limitations on markets.

The second part of Europe 1992 was to be a common European currency, though here, integration efforts have been so far largely unsuccessful. A sophisticated formula was worked out for currency values to be maintained and co-ordinated in advance of creating the single currency. Britain and Italy both had problems remaining within the agreed values and eventually dropped out of the system. Aside from the problems of maintaining agreed, smoothly coordinated values in an age of floating exchange rates, the concept of a single currency ran into the reality of the growing power of the German economy and the German central bank, the Bundesbank. Germany had become the dominant economic power in Europe by a steadily increasing margin; a single currency would without doubt be one that was managed primarily by German central bankers. Other Europeans simply would not accept this proposition, and a single European currency was postponed.

TURKEY IN EUROPE

In summary, institutional structures bearing on Turkey's role in Europe have evolved in important ways, with directions that are not necessarily what might have been predicted as a result of the end of the Cold War. NATO, a direct creation and instrument of Cold War diplomacy, has survived both the Cold War and the existence of the Soviet Union. Turkey's solid role in NATO, historically and currently, means there are ready avenues for continued involvement in Europe in security dimensions of policy and co-operation.

The European Union continues to expand in both membership and functions. In 1986, Turgut Özal government made membership in the Community a very high priority formal goal for Turkey. Yet the European organisation has continued to maintain an arms-length attitude on this matter. The fact that Turkey is not a member of the organization, and is generally viewed as sufficiently 'European' by influential existing members, it will continue to complicate the nation's role, further underscoring the importance of participation in NATO.

This, in turn, draws the discussion to the special ethnic characteristics of the Turkish population. Turkey's significant Moslem population, one main factor which complicates European Union participation, is a potential source of particular advantage in the broader context of European diplomacy. The European Union may remain narrowly aloof, yet issues of migration and ethnicity will only continue to grow more and more important on the European agenda. Turkey's distinctive blending of populations may ultimately prove to be a source of diplomatic and political advantage, especially as both Europe and the Middle East move away from existing basic conflicts and towards a more flexible interplay among nation-states.

Turkey has been emphasising European Union membership, yet diplomatic realities argue for renewed emphasis on opportunities within NATO and with the US. Turkey's strong role in NATO, for reasons of military tradition as well as strategic location, guarantees that continuing the Alliance will have a central role in the nation's diplomacy. NATO's role in Bosnia in turn indicates the organisation has an importance that transcends the Cold War. The bilateral relationship with the US will remain fundamental to Turkey's leverage with other powers, in Europe and for that matter, elsewhere. The powerful and public commitment which President George Bush made to Turkey during his administration, reflecting the crucial collaboration between our nations during the Persian Gulf War, in this context, continues to bear fruit. America, in any case, must continue to attend to the distinctive friendly relationship with Turkey in the context of the fluid post-Cold War world. The end of the Cold War has returned attention to the significance of individual nation states in Europe. Turkey's geographic location, distinctive population characteristics, military significance and alliance commitments provide the keys to understanding and defining the future roles for the nation in Europe.