

## Lecture 9:

# Turkey's Multi-Regional Perspective

Topics: -

- 1. Beyond the 'New Great Game'**
- 2. Turkey Looks West - and East and North**
- 3. The Fruitful but Problematic Turkish Model**
- 4. Prospects for a New Regional Dynamic**
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## 1. Beyond the 'New Great Game'

Several writers suggested the possibility of a **new Great Game** in Central Asia once the Soviet Union dissolved into a Russian Federation and the Newly Independent States of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus region - Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan (Kleveman 2003; Cuthbertson 1994; Malik 1992; Klass 1987). The **old Great Game**, of course, was the 19th century contest between Britain and Russia for influence in Central Asia, with 'lesser' players including the Ottoman Empire, Persia, Tibet, Japan, Afghanistan, Mongolia and China. As we have seen in previous lectures, this 19th century Great Game had serious outcomes for Tibet, Afghanistan, and set the scene for the war between Japan and Russian in the 1904-1905 conflict, thereby shaping later conflict and diplomacy.

Today, there may be a **new great game for influence and power** in the region being played out by Russia, the US, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and China. From late 2001, with the strong intervention of the U.S. and the EU into Afghanistan, the potential players in the game and their **relative balance of power has changed**. From this perspective, the new states of the region sought to align themselves, economically, politically and militarily with diverse partners in an environment largely established by the contest of these various powers. From this perspective, it is no longer true to speak a power 'vacuum' (for the older formulation, see Cuthbertson 1994, pp31-2) that had been created by the withdrawal of the dominant Soviet power. Some argue that this gap will be filled by other powers, including the spectre of a resurgent and militant Islam (for the implications of this view of Islam in Central Asia, see Lecture 8). **International security concerns and strategic resources**, especially oil and gas reserves in Central Asia and Iraq and Iran (Paik & Choi 1997; Kleveman 2003), are central components in this international competition (for some limitations to this view, see Jaffe & Manning 1998; Kemp 1998). Through 2003-2006, the U.S. (and allied nations) intervened in Iraq, further **changing power balances in the region, with serious implications for Iran, Turkey, Russia and China, but without clear stabilisation by 2007**.

This metaphor of a 'great game' is sometimes used as a way to view the conflict in modern Afghanistan (Klass 1987), as well as **a new phase of diplomatic and economic initiatives concerning Central Asia** which have been launched since 1989 (Gardiner-Garden 1995a, p2; Malik 1992). Ian Cuthbertson has suggested that the U.S. and Europe needed to play a constructive game in the region, rather than passively let events unfold (Cuthbertson 1994, p42-3), a fact strongly demonstrated with the current efforts to stabilise Afghanistan through 2001-2007 in spite of ongoing Taliban operations, especially along parts of the border with Pakistan through 2005-2007. Thus the U.S. through March 2007 has re-iterated its commitment to stabilising Pakistan and send a further 3,500 troops to Afghanistan, resulting in the total US commitment of 27,000 (ABC 2007a).

One of the clearest statements of this 'great game' scenario has been provided by Mohan Malik, who argued that serious instability in Central Asia could lead to new regional wars (Malik 1992a; 1992b). Others have suggested that at present Russia, China and Iran, have **medium and long term converging interests in cooperating to balance influence in Eurasia** and in promoting a multipolar world system (Ahrari 2001). If so, this vision received a sharp shock with the strong entry of U.S. diplomacy and military intervention into the region through 2002-2007. Cooperative agreements with Uzbekistan (wound down to some degree through 2005) and Kyrgyzstan, based on earlier initiatives put in place through the late 1990s (Anderson & Beck 2000), and most recently Georgia, have aided the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, and applied indirect pressure on Iran. However, Turkey finds itself in a difficult position amid some of the initiatives, and has **conditional cooperation** on some of these initiatives (e.g. Afghanistan), but remains cautious of current tensions in Iraq and with Iran.

As we shall see, regional relationships in central Eurasia are complex, still in a process of change, and are set within the context of wider regional and global concerns. Regional players with considerable impact on Central Asia include Russia, the US, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, China, India and the European Union. This lecture we will focus on **the way Turkey positions itself, among other powers**, within the region. In the past, Turkey and Iran were often viewed as mid-level powers who have chose different paths over the last several decades, generating a system of possible opposition and competition within the region. Turkey and Iran, alongside Russia, have been viewed as key Eurasian powers and having **pivotal regional roles** (Candar 2004, p51). After September 2001, **Turkey's regional importance increased:** -

There are economic and commercial benefits, and advantages related to Turkey's geo-political situation and role, especially for the relations of the EU with the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Black Sea and Central Asia. The strategic importance of Turkey has increased in the new period after September 11. After this date, terrorist attacks have changed strategic balances all over the world and thus all attentions have been turned to international terrorism, stated that Turkey's relations with the European Union form the most crucial factor in the role to be assumed by Turkey. . . . Turkey's accession would create and strengthen a genuine European South-Eastern European defense and security policy. (Ucer 2006)

Turkey and Iran represent, in regional terms, two of the most populous nations, both of whom have had a longstanding cultural contact with Central Asia, and who have **middle-level military and economic potentials**. Turkey has a population of over 72

million, Iran of over 67 million. As we shall see, **Turkey's interests in the region are conditioned by its membership in NATO**, and its desire for eventual membership in the EU, while **Iran, due to its relative isolation since 1979, has tried to diversity its relationships** with China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea, as well as improve trade ties with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, France and Germany. However, until recently, Iran also found itself largely isolated from a growing pan-Arab consensus on security issues, and with the heavy armament of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait after the Gulf War and with the 2003 build up against Iraq, has sought greater participation in the Middle Eastern and Afghanistan. Relations with Saudi Arabia have improved to some degree through the 1990s, but have not solved **Iran's regional exclusion**. In turn, **Turkey has had to rethink its role in the regional setting, looking to relations with both the U.S. and EU, but also trying to keep room to manoeuvre** in its engagement with Central Asia.

Through 1999-2005 Turkey's main international agenda was the preparation for formal accession talks for future EU membership, **positioning itself as a crucial partner for Europe within wider regional settings**: -

It is obvious that Turkey considers herself as a European state within the framework of political, social, economic, cultural and security criteria and aims to be an equal and an important state within the European structure. For this reason, the basic and stable characteristic of Turkish foreign policy is her tendency towards the West. This is not just a temporary event which aims to prevent threats against her security and borders but a continuous political choice. (Ucer 2006)

It is this **imperative that has pushed forward much internal reform, as well as moderated the way Turkey has pursued wider policies** in relation to Central Asia, the Middle East and Russia (see further below). Turkey's policy focus is **somewhat more multi-regional in focus** than before, but with the EU and US as key partners in Turkey's new Eurasian roles.

## **2. Turkey Looks West - and East and North**

The Turks comprised several tribal groups who entered Central Asia, breaking up in numbers of separate Turkic groups including the Kazakhs, the Oghuz in Turkmenistan, and the western Turks. The **Ottoman Turks** moved westward in the 14th century to create a great empire focused on Anatolia (modern Turkey). The importance of the Ottoman empire has been highlighted by one writer: -

At the time of its foundation at the turn of the fourteenth century, the Ottoman state was a small principality on the frontiers of the Islamic world, dedicated to Gazâ, the holy war against infidel Christianity. This insignificant frontier state gradually conquered and absorbed the former Byzantine territories in Anatolia and the Balkans and, with the conquest of Arab lands in 1517, became the most powerful state in the Islamic world. (Inalcik 1994, p3)

**In 1453 A.D. the Ottoman Turks managed to conquer the great classical city of Constantinople (today's Istanbul)**, thereafter destroying what remained of the Byzantine Empire. By the 17th century, the Ottoman empire controlled most of the eastern Mediterranean, all of Turkey, Greece and the Balkans, as well as parts of Central Asia. They were at first a **'ghazi (warrior) state** on the borderland of two

rival religions and civilizations' (Heper & Guney 2000, p636), situated on the fringe of Europe and soon controlling much of the Islamic and Arabic world. Beyond this, however, the Ottomans also used the construction of *imarets*, **urban centres** focused on a mosque and funded by religious charities to create an urban centre with a medrese, hospital, travellers' hostel, and water supply, followed by inns, caravanserai, markets, bath houses and shops, a tradition that shaped Anatolian and the Balkan town-planning (Inalcik 1994, pp141-142).



**Turkey Map** (Courtesy of Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection)

It was this historical movement of Turkish speaking peoples, influenced by Islam and elements drawn from Mongol and Persian culture, which helped create strong cultural affinities throughout the entire region of Central Asia. This **Turkish linguistic and cultural element** provided the background for a early 20th century dream of a modernised, unified state of Turkestan comprising all of Central Asia. Alongside this, **pan-Turkic ideas** (see Rubinstein & Smolansky 1995), partly influenced by the example of the secular revolution in Turkey in the 1920s, helped promote the *jadid* movement which sought to unify Islam and the notion of a modern nation-state. Today, Turkey can look east to a vast region comprising much of Central Asia with a total of some 150 million speaking Turkic-type languages (Rouleau 1993, p111). Dreams of **Turkestan** soon collapsed before Russian power and Soviet ideology, while in the east Turkic regions were soon dominated by a modernising China. This idea of a greater 'Turkestan' still leaves a cultural legacy. Furthermore, these different countries, though never unified in a single nation-state (the Turkestan hoped for by some pan-Turkic thinkers), do form part of a **cultural region** (Dawisha & Parrott 1994, p45; see also Taheri 1989, p224).

There were other impacts on the history of Central Asia. It was mainly Turkish control of the east Mediterranean coasts which cut off European traders from direct access to the Silk route, and which helped force European traders into the great age of sea-based exploration, though for a time Venetian trade networks remained intact. From the

15-19 centuries the **Ottoman Empire** played a major role in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, often as an antagonist to European or Russian interests (Goodwin 1998). The **Russians, in particular, took control of the khanates of the Volga River basin (Kazan in 1552, Astrakhan through 1554-1556), became the successor power to the Golden Horde, and then nibbled at Turkish possessions on the Black Sea from the late 18th century onwards, allowing the Russian Empire to penetrate into the Caucasus and Central Asian region by 1878** (Riasanovsky 1993; Inalcik 1994, p39). The Ottoman empire was largely destabilised through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and, since it had been an ally of Germany, was largely dismantled at the end of the World War I, with the Soviet Union gaining greater control of much of the trans-Caucasus and Central Asia by the end of the 1920s. Likewise, for a time it seemed that Turkey might be broken down into different regions of foreign control, with the Greeks receiving extensive 'rights' in Western Anatolia, under the 'abortive' **Treaty of Sèvres (1920) a negative memory that overshadows much current foreign policy** of Turkey (see Ahmad 2004). Through 1919-1922 a Greek army tried to establish control of central coastal Turkey after having landed Izmir but were defeated. **The current borders of modern Turkey were basically established through the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923** (Ahmad 2004, p16).

Turkey entered the modern era by forcing a constitutional monarchy on its Sultans, then by a nationalistic revolt (1908-1923), led by the 'young Turks' and **Kemal Ataturk** (d. 1938). This revolution was unique in that it propelled Turkey into a role as **a modern secular state**, disposing of much of the Islamic and Ottoman legacy, and rejecting forms of Islamic law and dress in all public and official settings, and controlling religion through a strict set of policies that divided political and religious affairs (see further Kinross 2004). At the same time, understanding that Turkey could not afford to antagonise the great Soviet power to its north, the Turkish government officially **abandoned its pan-Turkic policies**, rejecting any claim to help Turkic peoples in Central Asia and those under Soviet control. In part, this was based on the **difficult task of forging a Turkish national identity within the confines of its current borders**, a task which precluded any expansionist aims by the new Republic (Soysal 2004, p40). This policy of pan-Turkic solidarity would only be revived after 1989 in a new and softened form (see below).

*Timeline: Modern Turkey 1923-June 2002 ( adapted from BBC 2003)*

- 1923 - Assembly declares Turkey a republic and Kemal Ataturk as president.
- 1928 - **Turkey becomes secular**: clause with Islam as state religion removed from constitution.
- 1925 - Adoption of Gregorian calendar. Prohibition of the fez.
- 1938 - President Ataturk dies, succeeded by Ismet Inonu.
- 1945 - Turkey enters war on side of Allies against Germany. Joins United Nations.
- 1950 - Republic's first open elections, won by opposition Democratic Party.
- 1952 - Turkey abandons Ataturk's neutralist policy and joins Nato.
- 1960 - Army coup against ruling Democratic Party.
- 1961 - New constitution establishes two-chamber parliament.
- 1963 - Association agreement signed with European Economic Community (EEC).
- 1965 - Suleyman Demirel becomes prime minister - a position he is to hold seven times.
- 1971 - Army forces Demirel's resignation after spiral of political violence.
- 1974 - Turkish troops invade northern Cyprus.
- 1978 - US trade embargo resulting from invasion lifted.
- 1980 - Military coup follows political deadlock and civil unrest. Imposition of martial law.
- 1982 - New constitution creates seven-year presidency, and reduces parliament to single house.

- 1983 - General election won by Turgut Ozal's Motherland Party (ANAP).
- 1984 - Turkey recognizes "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus."
  - Kurdistan Workers' Party launches separatist guerrilla war in southeast.
- 1987 - Turkey applies for full EEC membership.
- 1990 - Turkey allows US-led coalition against Iraq to launch air strikes from Turkish bases.
- 1992 - 20,000 Turkish troops enter Kurdish safe havens in Iraq in anti-PKK operation.
- 1993 - Tansu Ciller becomes Turkey's first woman prime minister, and Demirel elected president.
  - Ceasefire with PKK breaks down.
- 1995 - Military offensive launched against the Kurds in northern Iraq, with 35,000 Turkish troops.
  - Ciller coalition collapses. Pro-Islamist Welfare Party wins elections but lacks support to form government - two major centre-right parties form anti-Islamist coalition.
  - Turkey enters EU customs union.
- 1996 - Centre-right coalition falls.
  - Welfare Party leader Necmettin Erbakan heads first pro-Islamic government since 1923.
- 1997 - Coalition resigns after campaign led by the military,
  - replaced by a new coalition led by the centre-right Motherland Party of PM Mesut Yilmaz.
- 1998 January - Welfare Party, the largest in parliament, banned. Yilmaz resigns amid corruption allegations, replaced by Bulent Ecevit.
- 1999 February - PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan captured in Kenya.
- 1999 July - Ocalan receives death sentence, later commuted to life imprisonment.
- 2000 - Ahmet Necdet Sezer takes over from Suleyman Demirel as president.
- 2001 January - Diplomatic row with France after French National Assembly recognises Genocide of Armenians during the Ottoman Empire.
- 2001 May - European Court of Human Rights finds Turkey guilty of violating the rights of Greek Cypriots during its occupation of northern Cyprus.
- 2001 June - Constitutional Court bans the pro-Islamic Virtue Party on the grounds that it had become a focus of anti-secular activities.
- 2001 July - A new pro-Islamist political party called Saadet - roughly translating as 'happiness' or 'prosperity' or 'felicity' - is set up, but does not get strong support.
  
- 2002 January - Turkish men are no longer regarded in law as head of the family. The move gives women full legal equality with men, 66 years after women's rights were put on the statute books.
- 2002 February - Turkey agrees three-year \$16 billion dollar loan deal with IMF, pledging to push ahead with economic reforms.
- 2002 March - Turkish and Greek governments sign an agreement to build a gas pipeline along which Turkey will supply Greece with gas.
- 2002 June - Turkey takes over command of the International Security and Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

These factors help explain why Turkey, though officially neutral in World War II, was somewhat sympathetic to German victories after 1941, since this would weaken the Soviet Union (Calis 1997; Ahmad 2004, p23), and reduce Russian pressure on her north flank and soften Russian demands concerning naval access from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean. Yet since the 1930s **Turkey began to see itself as a modern nation that belonged in Europe**, in contrast to a 'barbaric' Russia and a 'backward' Middle East (Calis 1997). Only in 1945 would Turkey join the allies against Germany, thereby paving the way for joining the United Nations as well.

On this basis, since the end of World War II, **Turkey aligned itself with NATO and the U.S., largely as a reaction to a perceived Russian and communist threat.** Since the 1960s, Turkey has pushed ahead with a 'western' alignment, seeking continued military recognition as part of NATO (Turkey and Greece were formally admitted in 1952), and in recent years has also sought (with little success) some alignment with European defence initiatives. However, Turkey soon found that there were limits to how far it could regard its security as fully guaranteed by this western

alignment. It was greatly surprised when the U.S. withdraw its medium-range nuclear missiles from Turkey on the basis of an agreement with Russia to reduce tensions after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Later on, when Turkish policies disagreed with those of the US and NATO, e.g. over the invasion of Cyprus in 1974 or during its period of military rule (1980-1983; earlier coups had occurred in 1960 and 1971), Turkey would find its supply of arms curtailed from Western sources. This type of restriction also occurred again in the 1990s with German cancellation of equipment sales over Turkish treatment of its Kurdish minority, and its invasion of Kurdish territories in northern Iraq in 1995, its repeated pressure on the north-western Iraq border in 2003, and **2007 Turkish military claims that if need be it could strike against Kurdish rebels across the border, thereby reducing claims to a wider Kurdish state** (Enginsoy 2007). Likewise, Turkey has been greatly concerned about the U.S. intervention in Iraq, since a failed transition could fragment that country and lead to revived Kurdish claims (see further below). As a result, **the Turkish military has always sought to retain a strong, independent military force** (and a bastion of secularism and the constitution, as well as retaining their elite-privileged position, see Heper & Guney 2000, p636; see further below).

Moreover, Turkey in the modern period recognised the dangers of trying to directly challenge the Soviets on the battlefield. Since 1921, when an initial treaty of friendship was signed with the Soviets, Turkey has, outside of her NATO membership, sought to **reduce any unnecessary bilateral tensions with Russia**, though diplomatically uncomfortable with Russia's near abroad policy of the mid-1990s. On this basis, it has also avoided becoming too directly involved in the dispute between nearby Armenia and **Azerbaijan**, though sympathising with Azeris, and providing indirect support and some transfer of weapons. **However, through 2001-2006 there have been greater signs of greater economic cooperation between Turkey and Azerbaijan**, including cooperation over pipelines, infrastructure development, and improvements in transportation facilities. Likewise, there has been continued growth in trade between **Russia and Turkey** during the last four years, and through 2004-2007 steps were begun to try to move this to a wider pattern of diplomatic cooperation. The Blue Stream Pipeline project, a 1,240 km long pipeline built under the Black Sea, provides natural gas and makes Russia one of the main energy suppliers to Turkey, but President Putin has signalled that he would like a wider range of cooperation to emerge in future years.

Modern Turkey has long sought closer ties with Europe, but this has been a slow and difficult process. From 1963 it developed an associational agreement with the then EEC (via the Ankara Agreement) and entered into a full Customs Union (member states had a unified set of tariffs for in-coming goods) from 1995 (Ucer 2006). During 1990-1995 Turkey has pushed ahead to enter a 'trade and tariff' agreement with the **European Union** - by 1993 40% of its foreign trade was with Europe, as was most of its tourist and technological transfers (Mango 1993, p730). By the early 1990s, 80% of total exports were in the industrial and manufacturing areas (Rouleau 1993, p117). Turkey hoped eventually to enter the EU as a full member, having formally applied as early as 1987 (Erlap 2004, p72), but was **rejected at that time due to problems over the Turkish economy, over human rights, and due to initial opposition from Greece** (Ucer 2006). **Relations with the European Union slipped to their lowest**

**level in 1997-1998** with the decision by the EU Conference on expansion to give Turkey the lowest priority on joining - prospective Eastern European countries were slated for earlier membership. Although a regular conference with Turkey was approved, issues such as improving relations with Greece and supporting UN settlements on Cyprus were quoted as prerequisites for progress on Turkish admission to the EU (Tucker 1997). The then Turkish Prime Minister, Mesut Yilmaz, threatened to withdraw Turkey's application unless it was granted equal status to other prospective members (Barham 1997). On that basis, Turkish generals began to consider the idea of an **alternative geo-political strategy with Turkey forging strong links with Iran and Russia** (Candar 2004, p58). Turkey was also refused admission to the Asia-Europe Meetings (*ASEM*) of 1996, 1998 and 2002. In fact, EU-Turkish relations had been at low ebb during 1997-1998, and even through 2002 at the Convention on the Future of Europe key figures such as Valery Giscard d'Estaing suggested that Turkey should not join the EU, while former French foreign minister, Hubert Vedrine, declared that 'Turkey is not a European country' (Muftuler-Bac 2003).

It was only in **December 1999 that Turkey was formally accepted as a candidate for future membership in the EU**. This was only done with the lifting of the Greek veto, in part due to conditions being established whereby Aegean and Cyprus disputes would be dealt with before formal accession negotiations (Soysal 2004, p43). Since this time, Greece has cleverly used organisations such as the UN, NATO, and the EU as part of its leverage on Turkey (Soysal 2004, p45). European concerns about problems with Turkey's legal and political system remained strong through 1999-2007 (see below), and the **status of a divided Cyprus** will need to be further resolved before Turkey gains full membership, including the removal of some 30,000 soldiers on the north of the island. In 2001 major concerns about the stability of Turkish currency and its economy also emerged, with partial recovery through 2002. Turkey had hoped that progress will lead to formal compliance to the Copenhagen criterion for membership to the EU through 2005-2007, with a major EU review in December 2004, and formal accession negotiations in late 2005 (Muftuler-Bac 2003; DFAT 2003; Ucer 2006). On this basis, it proceeded with major constitutional reform (34 amendments) through 2001-2002 to strengthen its case for beginning accession talks (Erlap 2004, p80), but progress in the **talks were slow and 'open-ended', with some suggesting that full membership may delayed as far as 2014** (Ucer 2006).

In **December 2004, the EU gave conditional go ahead for formal negotiations on membership to proceed in late 2005**, with Turkey committing to a 'raft of reforms', including greater freedom of the press, improved rights for minority groups, limiting the role of the military in political affairs, and removal of the death penalty (*Australian* 2005a). From 2003, **Turkey has also cooperated with a number of European programs** such as the European Environment Agency, and has tracked a number European Community programs that make it more compatible with European practices including 'Enterprise and Entrepreneurship, Gender Equality, Combating Discrimination, Combating Social Exclusion, Incentive Measures in the field of Employment, and the Sixth Framework Program on Research' (Ucer 2006).

Furthermore, the **Turkish government has also committed itself open-ended negotiations** without an absolute guarantee of future membership (which remains

conditional), including discussion of Turkish recognition of Greek Cyprus, issues which have criticised by Turkish opposition parties such as the Republican People's Party (CHP) (*Turkish Daily News* 2004a, p14). Indeed, there has been intense debate about carrying out some of these commitments to the EU, e.g. Turkey has been reluctant to extend the trade conditions of the custom union to all 10 new members of the EU, i.e. including Cyprus, though in the end this was done without explicit recognition of Cyprus (*Xinhua* 2004b; Ucer 2006) However, it may take 10 years (or even 15 years in the view of French President Chirac) to full membership to be achieved (*Xinhua* 2004a), giving the EU as well as Turkey time to prepare for a large new member state with Islam as its mainstream religion (98 of Turks are at least nominal Muslims, with 80-85% being Sunnis, an important Alevi or Shia minority, plus a very small Christian remnant). At the same time, **most Turks support a modernising secular political culture and favour a democratic political system**, and many, especially in coastal cities, will also claim to be European (*Australian* 2005a; for the origin of these claims as a modernising state with a vital role in European affairs, see Kinross 2004). From this point of view, 'Turkey has always been a power in Europe, and, therefore, a 'European' power (*Transitions* 2004). Ironically, even as **Turkey meets many of the economic and constitutional requirements** (under the Copenhagen Criteria, including modification of the penal system and broadcasting codes), a range of **secondary cultural and political issues** complicated the timing of future membership (see Ucer 2006).

**Different views remain within Europe on Turkey's role.** UK Prime Minister Blair supported Turkey's move towards entry, arguing that it shows "that those who believe there is a fundamental clash of civilizations between Christians and Muslims are actually wrong; that they can work together; that we can cooperate together." (in *Xinhua* 2004a) However, France and Austria suggested that they would need national referendums on the issue before they would finally accept Turkey's membership in the EU (*Xinhua* 2004a). This means that full membership for Turkey could well be achieved only in a 10-20 year timeframe (*Transitions* 2004). These **issues of identity and culture have been picked up again in 2007** with right wing European politician Bruno Gollnisch (deputy leader of France's National Front) re-iterating this as the logic of membership: -

'Mostly, Western European civilizations derive from Christianity. This is not the case for Turkey. Our values are very different from Islamic values. It is not only Muslim countries that we do not want in the EU. Buddhist countries and others also do not comply with our identity. Although my wife is a Buddhist from Japan, I would never ever want Japan or China joining our union,' he replied. 'Gollnisch continued with a metaphor, 'If you set up a football association, you do not let the rugby clubs in. This is the logic that lies behind our position.' (Camlibel 2007)

In contrast, others argue for a pragmatic approach towards the reality of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious Europe of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: -

The birthrate among Muslim immigrants in Europe is three times higher than that of the non-Muslim European population. According to Sweden's consul general in Istanbul, Ingmar Karlsson, if this trend continues, the Muslim population will be doubled by 2015, while Europe's non-Muslim population will decrease by 3.5 percent. Some estimates indicate that in 30 years the number of Muslims in Europe could be as high as 65 million.

The outspoken consul general, who is a doctor of divinity and the author of more than 10 books on the subjects of Europe's relationship with faith, terrorism, Islam and minorities, has said that the trend towards a multi-racial and multi-confessional Europe is unstoppable; therefore, Islam must be recognized and regarded as a "domestic" European religion. (*Today's Zaman* 2007b)



*Wind-power being utilised for electricity in a traditional coastal village of Turkey  
(Photo copyright by R. James Ferguson 2004)*

There are, however, several key **strategic elements to the entry of Turkey into the EU**, that make **membership important but problematic**: -

- 1) Turkey, with its large population (72.3 million as of 2004), would immediately become a **major player in European Institutions** (Ucer 2006; DFAT 2005), both within the European Parliament and in areas where qualified majority voting applies within the EU (it would have the second largest population after Germany).
- 2) Turkey has a strong agricultural sector, plus a large industrial sector, that will need **further reform to meet EU standards** and production policies.
- 3) After 2001, the EU and US have come to see Turkey as a **strategic linkage onto the Middle East**, as well as **helping control problematic transnational flows into Europe**, including drug flows and illegal migrants (*Transitions* 2004). Turkey, itself, as a relatively poor nation with large number of young people and has been a **source of labour outflows** (documented and non-documented): it has been suggested that a delay may need to imposed before full freedom of movement, residency and work might need to imposed to cope mass **migration flows** that might otherwise develop (see Ucer 2006). In fact controlled patterns of Turkish migration began in the 1960s as guest workers, with over 3.62 million now living and Europe, most of whom have integrated fairly well (some 2 million

have naturalised to the citizenship of the their host nation) - this suggested that this issue could be effectively managed in future (Ucer 2006). Indeed, with low or negative population growth in many European countries, Turkey could become a controlled source of labour and economic growth in the future. Although Turkey might be seen as a 'consumer' rather than a 'producer' of security, in fact European, Mediterranean and Turkish security issues are now deeply entwined (see Erlap 2004, pp75-76).

- 4) Turkey is a key partner in the **EU's Mediterranean projects**, including the Mediterranean Free Trade Project, which might see a free trade zone across the Mediterranean by 2012 (Ucer 2006).
- 5) Turkey does represent a **moderate success as a country with an Islamic population that is a secular state**, and a reforming democracy that has begun to slowly improve its human rights record (alongside Indonesia). It has also begun the political and economic integration path that would give it a shared future with Europe (*Transitions* 2004).
- 6) If Turkey does well in the accession process, this would also be a **signal for other states** on the borders of Europe that their own membership should be possible, e.g. even states such as Moldova, Georgia (*Transitions* 2004) and possibly a deepened for of associational status for Ukraine.
- 7) **Successful admission of Turkey into the EU would demonstrate the EU is not just a 'Christian club'**, giving the EU some extra leverage in the Middle East (Ucer 2006), and possibly in Central and South Asia. Furthermore, **if the accession process failed, this would signal a real limit to the 'European project'**, and have negative impact on the EU's 'institutional credibility'. (Ucer 2006).

Alongside this 'westward' policy there has also been **some limited and cautious return to accommodation with Islamic culture in Turkey**, which has allowed elements of Islamic education and custom to become more prominent into everyday life. By the early 1990s there had been a return to book publishing and broadcasting Islamic religious and historical ideas had (see Rouleau 1993, p119 for details). This trend also included **some Islamisation of opposition parties**, in particular with the formation of a coalition government involving the Turkish **Welfare Party (Refah)** in 1996-97 (*Refah* had only 21.3% in the December 1995 elections, but was needed to form a government). *Refah* gained **support in particular among the poor, in underdeveloped regions**, and in the southeast areas of the country (Heper & Guney 2000, p649). Former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan then emerged as the country's first pro-Islamist leader. This led some secularist groups in Turkey, especially well-educated professional women, to worry about reforms which might head down the path of placing restrictions on them in the future. Many women criticised former Prime Minister Tansu Ciller (of the True Path Party) for forming a coalition with the Welfare Party (Ms. Ciller in 1996 took up the post of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister). Yet it is probably this coalition which had also moderated any tendency for Erbakan to head down the line of passing Islamist laws during 1996. Indeed, through 1980s-1990s there was very **little support for the introduction of Shari'a law within Turkey** (between 1-7%, depending on the survey, see Heper & Guney 2000, p638). Indeed, support for *Refah* was based on its record as a clean party with little corruption, and due to its large network of social welfare support (Heper & Guney 2000, pp638-639).

From early 1997 **signs of serious tensions concerning the secular nature of the Turkish state emerged**, e.g. over a proposed law to allow women to wear the Islamic headscarf in offices and universities if they wished. Turkish army chiefs (General Cevik Bir and General Ismail Hakki Karadayi) warned the government that the military would not tolerate any moves which undermined the secular/democratic state established by Ataturk. **Under the 1982 Constitution Turkey is defined as a secular state**, and **Article 35 of the Internal Service Act of the Turkish Armed Forces (1961) makes the army responsible for defending the Republic of Turkey** as defined in the constitution (Heper & Guney 2000, p637). The opposition People's Republican Party (CHP) also expressed concern over possible Islamisation on the Iranian model. Yet Mr. Erbakan had been able to compromise: 'he has had to sign a new agreement with Israel, give his approval for the expulsion from the military of officers perceived to have Islamist leanings and to allow an elected mayor from his own party to be arrested' (Pope 1997).

However, the **Welfare Party coalition did not retain power** when nine parliamentarians resigned their posts, allowing a new minority government to form. In part, the failure of the Erbakan's government was based on **a political campaign orchestrated by the military**, using secular business groups, labor groups, and women's groups to block any pro-religious legislation (Boudreaux 2000). The Welfare Party then came under **Constitutional Court scrutiny** for possibly undermining the secular nature of the Turkish state. Through 1998-1999, the Turkish **Constitutional Court proceeded to ban the Welfare Party (RP)**, as well as against other religiously based parties. A new Islamist Virtue Party was then created as the older party was banned (Barham 1997). Thereafter, **coalitions of secular-oriented parties** (especially the Democratic Left Party, the Nationalist Action Party, and the Motherland Party) took government (Heper & Guney 2000, pp646-647). In early 2002, then Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit's party, Democratic Left Party (DSP), had two main coalition partners, Deputy Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's center-right Motherland Party (ANAP) and Deputy Prime Minister Devlet Bahceli's far-right Nationalist Action Party (MHP), indicating once again the need to keep a stable coalition intact.

**The government parties also negotiated security and penal laws in order to make them more compatible with EU human rights demands**, to limit and then the use of the death penalty, and to allow Kurdish publication and broadcasting with Turkey. At the same time, there is still a **strong concern with Turkish national identity** and with maintaining internal security: -

Article 312 states that inciting crowds to hatred on religious, racial, social, or cultural grounds is punishable by up to three years in jail. Legislators . . . reportedly added a clause saying that the offence, to be punishable by law, should not be committed "in a way that could endanger public order" or "put people in a dangerous situation." In its previous version, Article 159 said anyone defaming the military, the police, the government, or any other state institution that symbolizes "Turkishness" could face up to six years in prison. The amended version reduces the maximum jail term to three years. (Peuch 2002b)

Former President Suleyman Demirel and then Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit remained extremely **concerned about Islamic influence in Turkey**, and at a meeting of the National Security Council in late January 1999 urged all political parties not to use

religion in future elections (*Turkish Daily News* 1999). Former leader of the banned Welfare Party, Necmettin Erbakan, wanted to run as a candidate for a new party in the 1999 elections. However, this posed legal problems since according to a former head of the Constitutional Court, leaders of banned parties are not supposed to be founders, members, or directors of new parties, and are not eligible to run for a seat in Parliament (*Turkish Daily News* 1999b). Article 312 of the Penal Code prohibited speeches which might provoke hatred or violence (Cevik 2000), especially on religious grounds, a factor of importance for the **later leadership of Tayyip Erdogan and the ruling Justice and Development Party** (see below).

However, after **major economic crises through 2001, as well as political scandals**, and the failing health of the Prime Minister, the coalition government collapsed through late 2002, in part due to infighting about a leader to replace Ecevit (*BBC* 2002). This led to elections in which, surprising, the **mildly Islamist Justice and Development Party won elections** (acronyms are AK or AKP). This party received over one third of the national vote (just over 34%), with the second runner being the strongly secular Republican People's Party receiving, receiving approx. 19% of the votes (*BBC* 2002). However, it should be noted that most other parties did not pass the 10% limit required for representation, thereby routing the older government parties such as the True Path Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), with the Democratic Left Party performing extremely poorly.

On this basis, **the vote demonstrated a strong protest element**, indicating disillusionment with most political parties, rather than a total affiliation to the Justice and Development Party. It should be noted that approximately 80% of the electorate voted, a quite high level (DFAT 2003). Nonetheless, because of the small votes for other parties, the **Justice and Development Party controlled almost, but not quite, the two thirds majority** of seats (363, while the Republican People's Party held 178 seats, and independents 9) in the parliament needed to amend the constitution (*BBC* 2002; DFAT 2003). The Turkish system has a single 'unicameral parliament' (The Turkish National Assembly, TGNA), with 550 parliamentarians, while the President (Head of State) runs for seven years (with President Ahmet Necdet Sezer running from May 2000). **Governmental policy, however, is run through the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers**, a Cabinet style body (DFAT 2003).

*Selected Timeline: July 2002 - early 2007 (from BBC 2007a)*

**2002 July** - Pressure for early elections as eight ministers including Foreign Minister Cem resign over ailing PM Ecevit's refusal to step down amid growing economic, political turmoil. Cem launches new party committed to social democracy, EU membership.

**2002 August** - Parliament approves reforms aimed at securing EU membership. Death sentence to be abolished except in times of war and bans on Kurdish education, broadcasting to be lifted.

**2002 November** - Islamist-based Justice and Development Party (AK) wins landslide election victory. Party promises to stick to secular principles of constitution. Deputy leader Abdullah Gul appointed premier.

**2002 December** - Constitutional changes allow head of ruling AK, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to run for parliament, and so to become prime minister. He had been barred from public office because of previous criminal conviction.

**2003 March** - AK leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan wins seat in parliament. Within days Abdullah Gul resigns as prime minister and Erdogan takes over.

- Parliament decides not to allow deployment of US forces ahead of war in Iraq but allows US use of Turkish air space. It authorises dispatch of Turkish forces into Kurdish areas of northern Iraq.

**2003 June/July** - Eyeing future EU membership, parliament passes further laws easing restrictions on freedom of speech, Kurdish language rights, and on reducing political role of military.

**2003 November** - 25 people are killed and more than 200 injured when two car bombs explode near Istanbul's main synagogue. Days later two co-ordinated suicide bombings at the British consulate and a British bank in the city kill 28 people.

**2004 January** - Turkey signs protocol banning death penalty in all circumstances, a move welcomed in EU circles.

**2004 June** - Turkish state television broadcasts first Kurdish language programme. Four Kurdish activists, including former MP Leyla Zana, freed from jail. They are later granted a retrial.

**2004 July** - Three die in car bomb attack in southeastern town of Van. Authorities accuse Kongra-Gel, formerly the PKK, of involvement which it denies.

**2004 September** - Parliament approves penal code reforms introducing tougher measures to prevent violence against women and torture. Controversial proposal on criminalising adultery dropped.

**2004 December** - EU leaders agree to open talks in 2005 on Turkey's EU accession. The decision, made at a summit in Brussels, follows a deal over an EU demand that Turkey recognise Cyprus as an EU member.

**2005 January** - New lira currency introduced as six zeroes are stripped from old lira, ending an era in which banknotes were denominated in millions.

**2005 May** - Parliament approves amendments to new penal code after complaints that the previous version was too restrictive of media freedom. The EU welcomes the move but says the new code still fails to meet all its concerns on human rights.

**2005 June** - Parliament overturns veto by secularist President Sezer on government-backed amendment easing restrictions on teaching of Koran.

**2005 July** - Six killed in bomb attack on passenger train in east of country. Turkish officials blame PKK.

**2005 October** - EU membership negotiations officially launched after intense bargaining.

**2005 November** - Multi-billion-dollar Blue Stream pipeline carrying Russian gas under the Black Sea to Turkey officially opens in the port of Samsun.

**2006 March** - 14 suspected Kurdish rebels killed by security forces.

**2006 April** - At least a dozen people are killed in clashes between Kurdish protesters and security forces in the south-east. Several people are killed in related unrest in Istanbul.

**2006 July** - Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline opened at ceremony in Turkey.

**2006 August-September** - Bombers target resorts and Istanbul. Shadowy separatist group Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAC) claims responsibility for some attacks and warns it will turn "Turkey into hell".

**2006 30 September** - Kurdish separatist group, the PKK, declares a unilateral ceasefire in operations against the military.

**2006 December** - EU partially freezes Turkey's membership talks because of Ankara's failure to open its ports and airports to Cypriot traffic.

**2007 January** - Journalist and Armenian community leader Hrant Dink is assassinated. The murder provokes outrage in Turkey and Armenia. Prime Minister Erdogan says a bullet has been fired at democracy and freedom of expression.

**The new government, ironically, could not be ruled at first by Tayyip Erdogan because of a prior conviction**, a factor which initially stopped him being elected into parliament. From December 2002, **constitutional reform** (approved by President Sezer through 31<sup>st</sup> December 2002) allowed Erdogan to take a seat in the house, leading to his assumption of the office of Prime Minister through 12<sup>th</sup> March 2003, taking over from colleague Abdullah Gul (*Australian* 2003; DFAT 2003). He

**committed his government to respect the secular constitution of Turkey, to continuing the move toward full membership of the EU, a renewed interest in regional stability, and an agenda aimed at dealing with the damaged economy.** He has stated that his government will respect human rights, and 'will not impose Islam on anyone' (BBC 2002). There were **strong calls from the EU for Turkey to maintain the separation of state and religion** (Muftuler-Bac 2003). The victory of Erdogan was based in part on 'hungry and unemployed masses' who no longer turned to centre-left parties, plus the Islamist vote (Muftuler-Bac 2003).

Ironically, there have also been very serious concerns within Turkey and Europe about **limits on the freedom of religious expression** in Turkey (Cevik 2000; Kinzer 2000), limits which undermine the electoral system. On this basis, European officials have in the past argued that of the 13 nations which were candidates for EU membership, only Turkey was insufficiently democratic to meet EU requirements (Kinzer 2000). Religion and religious issues will remain a major concern in the political life of Turkey, and interact with limits to political freedom. However, tensions have emerged about minor signs that the Justice and Development Party was creeping towards **some limited form of legal accommodation for Islamic religious practices**: -

The Turkish political scene witnessed a series of mini-crises between the secular and religious groups since the elections. The first crisis arose over the headscarf issue as the new President of the Parliament, Bulent Arinc, made a public appearance with his covered wife in state protocol with President of the Turkish Republic and his wife. A second similar crisis erupted during the April 23 holiday when Turkish commanders, opposition and the President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, boycotted the reception in the Parliament for fear of being received by Arinc's wife in a headscarf. The headscarf issue - minor as it might seem - became the symbol of political Islam in Turkey and a demarcation line between religion and secular groups. (Muftuler-Bac 2003)

The debate of whether **headscarfs** can be worn in public buildings and universities remains a vital one - secularist and feminists alike are afraid that this might be the thin edge of the wedge. It is thus highly symbolic for both sides. **These tensions continued through 2005**, with the Parliament overturning the attempt of President Sezer to veto a legal amendment that eased reduced penalties for the teaching of the Koran in unregistered education centres (BBC 2006; BBC 2005b). Ironically, the more open approach to religious teaching was part of a wider set of laws mandated by democratic and governance reform before joining the EU. Likewise, through early 2005 the **government tried to chart a compromise path** when it issued amnesties for university students who had been expelled for wearing headscarves, but the law remained 'on the books' and in fact the re-applying students may still find their applications will not be accepted (Dymond 2005). Beyond the headscarf issue, there is a **wide range of cultural divides** between modernised urban Turks, immigrant flows into the poorer areas of the city, and between modernised coastal and poorer inland areas. In general terms, there has also in recent years been an increase in the number of mosques built, and face lifts to existing mosques, including the addition of higher and more prominent minarets, to some degree changing the face of urban Istanbul (as distinct from the centre of the old city). Legal reform has already ended the milder penalties once imposed for crimes based on 'honour killings', but remnants of these practices still need to be ended in remote rural areas. Due to these reforms 'the rape of a spouse is now illegal, domestic violence is recognised as torture, incest is outlawed,

and rapists who previously escaped punishment by marrying their victims will no longer walk free' (Jaffer 2005).

However, in general terms, a **split remains between hardline secularists and those that argue that reconciliation between Islam and the secular state is possible:** -

Today the maxim "once an Islamist always an Islamist" helps hardliners maintain their suspicion of the AKP. On the other side, the AKP signifies the possibility of reconciliation of Islam with secularism and democracy, thus arguably becoming a model for the rest of the Muslim world. (Cinar 2006, p469).

Another **divisive issue was alignment with the US over Iraq**. In particular, **the creation of a northern front in the U.S. led war against Iraq was a turning point in Turkish policy**, whereby over 62,000 U.S. troops might have been deployed (Filkins 2003). Through 2003 this was resisted by the parliament, which had turned down the plan by a narrow margin in early March 2003. According to Dexter Filkins, many government leaders had thought the plan would eventually pass, but had miscalculated strong resistance within the ranks of the ruling Justice and Development Party (Filkins 2003). Although air-space over Turkey was utilised to some degree to allow the bombing of Iraq, in the end, **U.S. forces were not allowed to deploy through Turkey into northern Iraq** (Muftuler-Bac 2003). Instead, Turkish troops moved a short distance into northern Iraq in order to close down the border and place pressure of Kurdish elements, a move not liked by U.S. commanders (see further below). This signalled a more independent policy path for Turkey, in some ways tracking European rather than U.S. initiatives.

In the past the Turkish government has been very pro-Western, and some Middle Eastern critiques have viewed it as essentially a U.S. proxy (such were early criticisms from the Khomeini regime in Iran), a view supported by statements by the Turkish Foreign Policy Institute in Ankara in 1993, which suggested that Turkey's main enemies were to the south and southeast, and one possibility was to try to extend the NATO area to cover the Persian Gulf (Mango 1993, p728). Furthermore, this **pro-Western policy** allowed Turkey to engage in trade deals with Israel, and an emerging **security cooperation between Turkey and Israel**, a policy which has also been widely criticised in some Middle Eastern circles. Turkey recognised the state of Israel in 1948 and retained good relations ever since, though it has also supported the demand for a state of Palestine (Rouleau 1993, p114). This has led to expanded trade relations over the last decade, and prospect of future water export earnings through 2006 for the following 20 years. This has led to complicated Turco-Arab relations and **tensions along the Turkish-Syria border** (see Bezanis 1996a & 1996b). Turkey also charged that Syria had been training Kurdish rebels, an issue that had only been resolved with accords signed in October 1998. Furthermore, the U.S. hoped to placate Turkey and retain it as a powerful ally in the Middle East and Central Asia (Barham 1997), while after September 2001 it was viewed as one of the main Western allies in the region.

However, **Turkey has not received complete recognition as a modern democratic state** immediately ready to enter into a closer political association with Europe. This has largely been based on several factors that **remained a challenge through 2000-2003, but which have been partially reformed through 2004-2006:** -

\* Turkey has a **strong statist approach**, emphasising state powers and state security rather than individual rights. This was most extreme under military rule, but has remained problematic down to 1996-2003, with repeated **claims of human rights abuses** by Amnesty International. These abuses have been directed at left wing groups, liberal elements who oppose police powers, as well as against the Kurdish population generally, who are certainly economically disadvantaged, as well as members of the (PKK) Kurdish Workers Party (see Mango 1993, p733-4 & Rouleau 1993, pp122-125), against a Shiite Muslim minority, the Alawites (Bal 1997), and in the past against Armenians. From 2002, the PKK has moved towards a more political/civil strategy, and renamed itself the **Congress for Freedom and Democracy in Kurdistan (KADEK)**, a process which the Turkish government has viewed as a 'sham' (DFAT 2004). At the same time we cannot generalise this to Turkish intolerance: a prosperous Jewish community in Turkey has been generally well treated, with the Ottomans willing to take in Jews expelled from Spain in the late 15th century (a sumptuous 500yr celebration of this generous action took place in 1992, see Mango 1993, p753). Young urban middle classes, in particular, look forward to a more free and generally modern-Western lifestyle. In general, **trends from the late 1990s suggest progress in democratic institutions**, with the military playing a moderating rather than dominant role in political affairs, and with a new and more positive role for moderate Islamic political parties down through 2003 (Heper & Guney 2000, pp650-653). Through 2001-2002, however, there was **greater sensitivity to organised religious groups**, e.g. new tensions with the dervish order, the Alevi-Bektashi Institution, on the basis that it was promoting a sectarian belief and religious separatism, as well as concerns about extremist terrorist groups (Peuch 2002a; for Ottoman tensions with diverse sufi and dervish orders, including the Bektashi order that became popular with the Janissary military groups, see Inalcik 1994, p99, pp193-199).

\* **Concerns about human rights and political prisoners** have been of ongoing concern to the EU, U.S. and human rights groups. On this basis, Turkey if it joins the EU will have to in future conform to the European Court of Human Rights, and several political cases will have to be retried in future (Muftuler-Bac 2003). Ironically, this will not only open up a wider space for Kurds and reformers, but also for religious prisoners. On this basis, as well, Turkey in late 2004 agreed to ending the use of the death penalty.

\* **Past disputes between Greece and Turkey, and tension over Cyprus.** In fact legacies of tension have continued since Greece staged a revolution against Ottoman rule, with renewed tensions in 1897, 1918-20, 1955, the early 1960s, and 1974. These disputes have included diplomatic conflicts over small islands along the coast of Turkey and control of resources in the Aegean, with disputes escalating in late 1995. Major disputes have escalated from 1955, especially after 1974 with the Turkish military intervention in Cyprus, and the problem of ethnic warfare in Cyprus between Greek and Turkish groups. The island remains divided, the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' (TRNC) recognised by Turkey, and garrisoned by up to 30-35,000 troops (DFAT 2003; Ucer 2006). Tensions over military exercises in Cyprus emerged again in late 1997. To date, slow progress has been made on these issues, but Cyprus remains subjected to ethnic tensions which a UN monitored border between the two communities. Relations between Greece and Turkey

improved slightly in 2000 when aid and emergency workers from Greece arrived to help with massive earthquake damage, but this good will was not sustained, and in October 2000 Greece pulled out of joint NATO exercises with Turkey due to renewed tensions. **Tensions resurfaced** in 2001-2002 over the treatment of Greek religious art and icons in the Turkish controlled part of Cyprus. As southern Cyprus has accelerated entry into the EU, there is no increased pressure to resolve these tensions. Through 2003 the border between north and south was softened, and tension were eased, but a March 2003 deadline for agreement, allowing a 'unified' Cyprus to join the EU, were not met. In February 2004 Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders agreed to continue reunification talk (BBC 2004a). These failed again, in spite of strong EU, UN and US pressure, though the border between the two sides has been opened up for visits. The UN re-unification plan required support from referenda from both north and south, and was rejected in Southern Cyprus. Through EU negotiations with Turkey through 2004-2005, there was an expectation that Turkey would recognise the Republic of Cyprus (southern Cyprus) as an EU member, at least in trade terms as one of the new 10 members of the EU, though this may not lead to full diplomatic recognition (BBC 2005a). This remains politically contentious, and Prime Minister Erdogan rejected the demand for an explicit and written commitment of (Greek) Cyprus (Ucer 2006). Indeed, the actual implementation of the trade agreement has been slow, with Turkey seeking a deal whereby 'the Turks would open their ports and airspace to Greek-Cypriot carriers in return for an end to the bans on direct trade that have hemmed in northern Cyprus' (*Economist* 2006). The **Turkish military has insisted that it cannot withdraw from northern Cyprus unless there is lasting settlement on the island** which protects the interests of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, while the current government has found full and explicit recognition difficult to accept in terms of domestic Turkish politics. Ironically, Turkey now engages in dialogue with an EU table that includes one member it does not fully recognise and Turkey still has an 'occupation force' on what is technically, from the European perspective, 'EU territory' (Ucer 2006).

\* **An ongoing special role for the military as defender of the constitution, secularism and (cultural) nationalism**, and a key force against Islamism in the country (Heper & Guney 2000). The Turkish generals had wielded considerable power through the **National Security Council**, which is made up of the President, four senior ministers, and five top military commanders, and at times seemed to act almost as a parallel government (Boudreaux 2000; Heper & Guney 2000, p637). This has led to an overuse of security concerns in political life in Turkey, as well as the maintenance of a strong military machine. The military spends about 9% of the government budget, and also had extensive holdings in the defence, automotive, cement, food and chemical industries (Boudreaux 2000). The military remains concerned about the Kurdish issue, particularly if Iraq remains unstable or is fragmented into zones of influence, a possibility that cannot be ruled out as conflict continues through 2003-2007. **The EU has been critical of the role of the National Security Council as indicating a lack of civilian control of the military, and it has since been reformed** to increase the number of civilians in it from 5 up to 9, while military membership has been held at 5 (Muftuler-Bac 2003). It has been argued that the **National Security Council now acts less like a hidden government and more like a think-tank** in Turkish policy areas.

- From 2002 through early 2006 Turkey remained deeply concerned about **regional stability**. On this basis, in late 2002 **convened a regional conference aimed at moderating tensions over Iraq**. In large measure, the meeting hoped to dissuade the U.S. from a short path to military intervention, a policy which had failed by March 2003. The Justice and Development Party was aware that up to 90% of Turks were opposed to war against Iraq (Torbakov 2003), and that a war could have negative implications for its economy, and for management of the trans-border problem of Kurdish nationalism. In spite of large offers of aid (direct aid of up to \$6 billion, including \$2 billion of military assistance, but total aid and loans of a much larger figure, cited as anywhere between \$15-30 billion and \$23-30 billion, *Australian* 2003, BBC 2003b, *Ascribe* 2003; Muftuler-Bac 2003; Candar 2004, p47), the Turkish government was cautious about allowing a land front to be opened up from Turkish soil, a more contentious issue than the reception of defensive missile defence systems. However, the counter-argument had been that if Turkey was not involved, it would have much less influence on any post-war settlement of Iraq, an issue of great concern to the Turkish military leadership, which is also concerned about 'hidden agendas' in the U.S. plan (Torbakov 2003). In general, **Turkey had preferred a status quo situation as a controlled form of regional stability**, rather than radically altering the geopolitical realities of the region (Torbakov 2003). The U.S. did not wish to see Turkish troops coming into direct conflict with Kurdish groups in northern Iraq, an issue made explicit by then US Secretary of State Colin Powell (BBC 2003). Turkey did not move deeply into Iraq, but did seek to control its borders and a shallow zone leading into adjacent Iraqi territory. In the light of these tensions, it is not surprising that through November 2003 Turkey dropped plans to send troops into Iraq in support of coalition operations there (*APS Diplomat Recorder* 2003a). Through late 2003, in spite of ongoing sabotage, pipelines from oil fields near Kirkuk in northern Iraq to Ceyhan in Turkey resumed operation (*APS Diplomat Recorder* 2003b). **Turkey has also sought to be a major player in the new regional policy towards Iraq and Iran launched in March 2007: -**

One decision made at the conference was setting up committees between Iraq and its neighboring countries in order to cover security, refugees and energy issues - a decision considered by the Turkish delegation as a significant and concrete outcome of the meeting.

In addition to Turkey, the participants at the talks included all Iraq's neighbors - Iran, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait - as well as the US, Russia, France, Britain, China, Bahrain, Egypt, the UN, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Arab League.

Turkey's special envoy for Iraq, Ambassador Oğuz Çelikkol, led the Turkish delegation at the conference.

"The final declaration of the conference took note of Ankara's proposal of gathering Iraq's neighbors together with permanent members of the UN Security Council as well as with the G8 countries -- the United States, Canada, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia -- that have contributed to Iraq at an enlarged international conference in Istanbul," the same Turkish diplomat said, emphasizing that it was a sufficient indicator that the planned Istanbul meeting would take place with broad participation. . . .

On Saturday, the US ambassador to Iraq said US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would attend the planned ministerial meeting of regional

and world powers on Iraq expected to be held in İstanbul in April. (*Today's Zaman* 2007)

These problems should not be exaggerated. Turkey's **potential as a growing capitalist economy** has led to considerable trade and investment with the West, with Germany and the UK in particular, followed by the U.S. and Russia (DFAT 2003; DFAT 2004). Turkey's possible role in a new regional order, with Turkey as a member of NATO, certainly has given it some leverage with both America and the EU. In future, Turkey may also be strategically important for the emerging European Security and Defence Identity, though to date the EU has not permitted direct involvement in its ESDI plans (Muftuler-Bac 2003; Soysal 2004, p44). Likewise, Turkey has supported the international intervention in Afghanistan. In March 2002, U.S. Vice-President Dick Cheney has promoted the idea of Turkey leading ongoing peace-keeping force in Afghanistan, and offered financial aid in support of this idea of around \$228 million (*Association Press* 2002). Turkey took up this role, commanding the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), focused mainly on Kabul, after Britain gave up the role, once again **demonstrating a concern with regional stability in Central Asia**.

Turkey might be seen as a valuable **strategic balancer** in Middle Eastern and Central Asia affairs. Turkey has also tried to utilise its position in relation to being a 'front line' state in relation to terrorism. In March 2002, the then Prime Minister 'speaking at a European Union summit meeting, urged the bloc to give efficient support for Turkey's fight against terrorism', and wanted Turkish 'terrorist groups such as the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C)' on Europe's list of terrorist organisations (*Turkish Daily* 2002; PKK later renamed itself to KADEK). In general, Turkey has sought to assimilate, with limited success, the Kurdish minority (Houston 2001), and has sought to avoid any extension of the idea of a Kurdish state centred on a fractured northern Iraq, an issue that remained of concern. A number of **small but active terrorist groups**, including elements from Hizbullah (with up to 4,000 active, armed members, separate to the Lebanon group), the IBDA-C (Islamic Great East Raiders Front, with up to 500 members), and the Tevhit-i Selam, have used explosives against urban targets or committed assassinations over the last several years (Muftuler-Bac 2003; *Strategic Comments* 2000), with bomb attacks the British consulate and a British bank in November 2003.

### **3. The Fruitful but Problematic Turkish Model**

It is against this background that we can see the **Turkish model** is often presented as the preferred one for development for Central Asian states: i.e. a secular, relatively stable, pro-Western approach (see for example Bal 1997; Cuthbertson 1994, p38), and idea which has been revived in the post-2001 period. Proponents of this approach, however, often forget the poor human rights legacy of Turkey, its problems with ethnic minorities, and past claims of collusion between a powerful Turkish mafia and elements in the government. Furthermore, the almost completely secular approach of the early Turkish Republic after 1923 was so extreme that it has in the 1980s and 90s had to gradually allow some return of Islam into political life. Such entirely secular approaches, adopted in part in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, has lead to minority

resistance in most states of Central Asia, where Islam tried to engage in a kind of renaissance (see lectures 4 & 8). Indeed, since Islam forms a key of social identity in most of Central Asia (see Gunn 2003), it is not certain that simply copying the Turkish model (with its strong nationalism) will work.

The Turkish economy, though developing (positive growth of 5.0-8.9 was recorded through 2002-2006, DFAT 2006), is **not strong enough to provide a major input into development in the Central Asian States**. Likewise, the state of Turkey suffered from high inflation (60-70% through the early 1990s), unwise fiscal policies (printing too much money), and a very high foreign debt (\$56 billion in 1993, see Mango 1993, p743). This means that its high economic growth from 1981-1993, (between 6 and 8%, Rouleau 1993, p117) did not provide the level of social stability and modernisation it had hoped for. The economy conformed to an export led- cycle through the 1980s, with a **strong need for inputs of investment and short-term capital flows through the 1990s to sustain growth and reform** (Ertugrul & Selcuk 2001). After a shrinkage in the economy through 2001, Turkey returned to positive growth through 2002-2004, but combined with some increase in inflation (around 35% on CPI figures, dropping to around 11.4% in 2004, DFAT 2004), and unemployment rated at around 10-11% officially, but perhaps realistically closer to 15% (DFAT 2003; DFAT 2004). Likewise, a **large informal and undeclared (not-taxed) sector of the economy, viewed as at least 20% of GDP**, has been a problem for government financing (DFAT 2003). From this perspective, it is a **somewhat flawed developmental model**.

From January 2000, Turkey reached agreements with the World Bank for further **structural reform to their economy**, resulting in expected agreements of up to US\$750 million to support changes in 'public expenditure management, agriculture, energy, social security and privatization' (*Turkish Daily News* 2000). From 1999, the International Money Fund also began programs in Turkey designed to bring inflation under control (currently running at 26%), but slow reform in the Turkish banking sector led to 12 of these major banks needing support from the Turkish government, with the IMF and the EU providing \$11.2 in fresh loans in November 2000 (Zeihan 2001), topped up later to an entire package of over \$16 billion (*Australian* 2003). Problems with the Turkish economy emerged in force through February and March 2001. A row between President Ahmet Sezer and Bulent Ecevit made these issues public on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2001, sparking off a flight of investment and a drop in value of the Turkish lira of over one third (Zeihan 2001). Events through 2001 demonstrated the need for serious reform of the banks, which would then be privatised, as well as the sale of 51% of the state telecommunications company (Fraser 2001). **Through 2002-2006, the financial crisis has been slowly stabilised**, but renewed IMF and EU efforts were needed to continue this process. In general terms, the EU has been satisfied that greater transparency and fiscal restraint has been established in government, and that secure and open rules for foreign direct investment have also been laid down (see Ucer 2006).

To date, **Turkey has pursued constructive engagement with all Central Asian states**, being especially **active in trade, investment, education and cultural contacts**. Hundred of protocols and agreements have been signed on areas such as 'banking, industry, agriculture, trade, aeronautics, education, publishing, academic

and military training', and Turkey had begun 'flooding the Central Asian republics with journals, books, and television programs beamed via a French-built satellite station' (Rouleau 1993, p112). Yet, in the modern world, physical proximity does not provide the advantages it once did, with Central Asia wishing to open to a wide range of global influences, including stronger engagement with U.S., EU and East Asian economies. Likewise, the creation of any kind of 'Turkic bloc' would both alarm Russia and be beyond the geo-political resources of Turkey (Soysal 2004, p38)

**Turkish relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan** have been more complicated. Turkey has always had closer ties ethnically and politically with the Azeri people than with other Central Asians, and has generally sought to restrain Armenian successes by two policies: firstly, by the application of **diplomatic pressure**, including support of Gorbachev's original position that Nagorno-Karabakh must remain in Azerbaijan, and secondly, **by sending arms and equipment to Azerbaijan**. At the same time, there are real limits to how far Turkey can intervene in this dispute. Firstly, any large scale intervention would simply justify a Russian military presence along the borders of Armenia and the continuation of Russian military bases in the region. On this basis, Armenia in June 1994 offered bases for Russian forces on a rent-free basis (Lepingwell 1994, p77). It is in Turkey's interest not to have a Russian, or even large CIS force along its own borders. In large measure, Russia has used a range of diplomatic and military moves to largely exclude large-scale Turkish and Iranian initiatives in the region (Cuthbertson 1994, p36). Secondly, world opinion, including that of NATO and the US, does not entirely favour the Azeri position, opening Turkey to further diplomatic and economic sanctions if it intervenes too openly. Here, **charges of genocide by the Turks against the Armenians in 1909 and 1915 still remain a controversial issue** (Redgate 2000, pp270-272), as seen by Turkish anger over French National Assembly's explicit recognition (in 2001) of the Armenian genocide issue. Nonetheless, Turkey has managed to avoid allowing the CIS to dominate the issue. Through early 2002 Turkey opened up a security dialogue with neighbouring states in the Caucasus (excluding Armenia), and also began a deepened cooperation with Azerbaijan.

In summary, **Turkey remains a regionally powerful but troubled state, hinged between Europe, Central Asia and Middle East**. Essential political and economic reform needs to continue if Turkey is to balance its hopes of future admission into the European Union alongside the maintenance of a positive international environment in the Black Sea area, Central Asia and in its relations with the Middle East. Thus, though relations with the EU may be primary, Turkey has several patterns of regionalism it can play into, i.e. **multi-regional approaches and bridging strategies** (see Rubin & Krisci 2001). Recent changes in power relations (2001-2007) within Eurasia have given **Turkey a strategic opportunity to increase its regional importance**, but only by taking on certain risks. Turkey will need to retain economic and political stability to be strong enough to capitalise on this situation.

#### **4. Prospects for a New Regional Dynamic**

To date, Iran and Turkey have shown signs of **competition for influence, but not the large-scale intra-regional conflict suggested by the Great Game model**. Indeed,

the need of both states to develop economically within a troubled region has meant that they began to moderate outstanding tensions even through the late 1990s (see Olson 2000). Wider regional factors, including the rise of international terrorism, the reconstruction of Afghanistan, and US intervention against Iraq from 2003, have begun to change these forces in the region. Aside from factors already mentioned, regional cooperation indicators include: -

\* The clearest sign of regional cooperation are a number of **fledgling regional organisations**. Aside from the Caspian Sea regional organisation, these include the **Black Sea Economic Cooperative Community** (formed June 1992, strongly supported by Turkey, see Rouleau 1993, p113) and the **Economic Cooperation Organisation** (ECO). The ECO is something more than a reborn version the RCD (Regional Cooperation and Development organisation, or of CENTO, the Central Treaty Organisation). The ECO links Central Asia to Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Azerbaijan in a cooperative arrangement which seeks to improve trade, investment, travel and communication links (Yasmeen 1995, p9). The strength of these regional forums is yet to be fully developed: the ECO in particular does not have strong economic complementarities, is plagued by low intensity competition between Turkey, Iran and Pakistan for influence in Central Asia, and has found turmoil in Tajikistan and Afghanistan particularly disturbing. Yet such organisations are beginning to develop common banks, shipping companies, airlines, simplified visa and trade arrangements, and agreements to reduce drug traffic (Yasmeen 1995, p9). Furthermore, the ECO provides a forum for future tensions to be aired on a regular basis. In early 1997, for example, Western observers were somewhat surprised at Turkish initiative to improve relations and trade with Iran, and even to purchase oil from Iran (Boustany 1997).

\* Turkey, due to its linguistic and ethnic commonalities, was keen to enter into a constructive role in Central Asia and Azerbaijan. This has included **investment and trade in the region**. Efforts have been made to improve telecommunications, improve road routes, and smooth passage for trade at border crossing. As well, there have been upgraded levels of diplomatic and military cooperation. Likewise, pipelines routed to Ceyhan in Turkey are of major importance to Central Asian states, including Azerbaijan. Likewise, pipelines from northern Iraq are important to Turkey's eastern economic development.

\* However, the early euphoria for a new 'pan-Turkic' Central Asia, and early hopes by the US administration that Turkey could become the conduit for the Westernisation of Central Asia have largely failed. **The Turkish model could not readily be exported into Central Asia**. This has been due to the fact that western Turkish dialects are not directly, easily intelligible in Central Asia, due to Turkey's lack of export capital, and due to the fact the most Central Asian states would like to create their own direct links with European and American nations, and not use Turkey as a dominant middleman. **After 2001, this model has been somewhat revived with Turkey being viewed as an important if not always predictable alliance partner for the EU, US, NATO and Israel**. Through 2004-2005 as Turkey moves closer to the EU, it is possible that it will be once again viewed as an economic and developmental model, though this **process has slowed through 2005-2006** as the EU itself began to question its own pace of integration and expansion.

As we can now see, **Central Asia is anything but a vacuum**. From Chinese and Central Asia perspectives, vacuums, even when they exist, do not necessarily need to be filled - the demands for strategic manoeuvre and disentanglement from dangerous future obligations suggest that they should not, especially by medium powers or even by future great powers uncertain of their future commitments. As Turkey found when it hoped to capitalise on its cultural connections with the region, **Central Asia is a wide and complex geographical terrain, which has an underdeveloped infrastructure, a complex ethnic, religious and political ecology, and the potential for dispersed conflict** as well as nasty border incidents. All these factors mean that rather than a vacuum, Central Asia provides complex socio-political environment for external interests. These factors have been recognized by both Turkey and Iran, both of whom have demonstrated considerable caution in recent years in their attempts to gain advantages from the region. Both have been restrained in their support for the Azeris, for example, with Iran repatriating some 100,000 refugees who fled into Iran due to the conflict with Armenia. Especially through 2001-2007, Russian, Chinese, U.S. and European interests represent stronger if less clearly focused influences on Central Asia than either Turkey or Iran. **Turkey may be able to gain some strategic advantages** from the political climate inspired by the 'war on terror', but there is no guarantee that it will be viewed as a suitable model for future development.

**Key questions remain** to be considered for the future of Turkey: -

- \* Will Turkey be formally admitted into the EU after long and 'open-ended' negotiations (with probable full membership dates ranging from 2010-2020)?
- \* Can Turkey act as a bridge between 'West and East', helping dialogue between the U.S. and EU with Central Asia and the Middle East?
- \* Will Turkey need to further reform its constitution to allow a greater political space for Islam, or would this destabilise the country?
- \* Can Turkey improve its relations with the Kurds in the long term, as well as stabilise trans-border concerns with Iraq?
- \* Can Turkey emerge as a respected 'middle power', sustaining a stabilisation role in the Eurasian region, e.g. in ongoing operations in Afghanistan and in future efforts to stabilise the Caucasus region?
- \* Can Turkey engage in several regionalisation processes effectively, or will the EU remain its main focus?

Likewise, once the U.S. moved against Iraq and forced regime change on the country, this ended old **dual containment** policy (limiting the strength of both Iraq and Iran) ended. This opens up **new power differentials among Turkey, Iran and Iraq**. If Iraq can be reconstructed as a U.S. ally in the heart of the Middle East, then this is a daunting prospect for Iran. However, a destabilised Iraq would make Iran a relatively strong if isolated state in the region, and issue of some concern to Turkey in spite of improved relations over recent years. **Regional uncertainties and conflict have stopped a wider Eurasian region**, or the 'fourth region' proposed by Milad Hanna (Hanna 1993) from effectively integrating. Whether constructive integration will occur, largely depends on the mutual restraint of Russia, Turkey and Iran, and a more proactive, long-term policy being developed in the U.S., China and Europe. In this setting, too **Turkey will need to sustain a more active and pro-active regional**

**foreign policy** (Martin 2004, p5) that goes beyond traditional reliance on the US and EU (for this orientation in Turkish foreign policy since 1967, see Ahmad 2004, p33). The future development of Turkey-EU, Turkey-Russia relations and U.S.-Iran relations are central to progress in the region.

## 5. Bibliography and Further Resources

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For news on Turkey and the region, see *The Turkish Daily News*, an English-language newspaper site with free and subscriber sections. Homepage located at <http://www.TurkishDailyNews.com/>

The *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey* has an English website at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/mfa>

A listing of Turkey and Turkic websites and resources will be found at *Turkey and Turkey Communities* at <http://www.khazaria.com/turkic/>

A wide range of international and local Iranian news sources on Iran are collected in the news section of the *Persepolis* Webpage at <http://www.persepolis.com/news/news-page.htm>

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