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Turkish Foreign Policy
in the Post-Cold War Era:
The Challenges of Multi-Regionalism

Sabri Sayari

*"Observers have described Turkey's efforts to chart
its course in the new international system in such
terms as a policy of 'new activism' or one that
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international and regional affairs...."*

The end of the Cold War and the resulting superpower competition has had major repercussions on global and regional politics. In the 1990s, all states, large and small, sought to adjust to the new international realities resulting from the tides of change that swept through Eurasia. Turkey is one of the countries that was most profoundly affected by the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, the transformation of the political and strategic landscape of Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the eruption of violent ethno-national conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus. These developments radically altered Turkey's foreign policy environment, creating opportunities to expand its role while also posing new risks and challenges. Moreover, these changes have occurred during a period when the growing visibility of political Islam and the intensification of the Kurdish problem increased strains on the country's political and social order. The combined impact of these external and internal developments may have made the difficult task of adjustment to the post-Cold War international system even more challenging for Turkey than for most other countries. They also underscored the growing importance of the linkages between Turkish foreign policy and domestic politics.

In the 1990s, Turkey modified some of its established Republican foreign policy principles and undertook new initiatives to meet the

challenges of the post-Cold War era.[1] Observers have described Turkey's efforts to chart its course in the new international system in such terms as a policy of "new activism" or one that displayed signs of both "daring and caution."[2] Indeed, compared to the Cold War years, Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s was significantly more activist and assertive in the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. However, this did not imply the abandonment of moderation and caution that has traditionally characterized Turkey's approach to international and regional affairs. On some issues, particularly those concerning northern Iraq and Syria, Turkey did adopt policies that were daring and carried considerable risk. On others, however, including its response to the ethno-national conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus, Turkish activism was noticeably cautious and moderate, despite considerable domestic pressure for greater military aid to beleaguered Muslim and Turkic communities.

ASSERTIVE ACTIVISM: THE MIDDLE EAST

Turkey's pursuit of active and assertive policies has been most pronounced in the Middle East. With the exception of a brief period in the mid-1950s, Turkey has assiduously pursued a cautious and low-profile policy toward its southern neighbors. This conservative approach arose from several worries: Turkey was concerned about the possibility of being drawn into regional conflicts; its main focus was on the perceived Soviet threat from the north; and the former Soviet Union's close ties with countries such as Syria limited the scope of Turkey's actions.

Turkey's traditional Middle East policy underwent a significant change with its decision to participate in the 1990 Gulf War. Under President Özal's leadership, Turkey joined the Allied coalition, took a strong stand against Saddam Hussein's regime, terminated the flow of Iraqi oil exports through the pipelines in Turkey and permitted the US Air Force to use NATO bases in

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[1] For an earlier assessment of the impact of the end of the Cold War on Turkish foreign policy, see Graham E. Fuller and Ian O. Lesser, eds., *Turkey's New Geopolitics* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1993) and Andrew Mango, *Turkey: The Challenge of a New Role* (Westport: Praeger, 1994). For a recent overview, see Yasemin Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy* (Westport: Praeger, 1999).

[2] Alan O. Makovsky, " The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy," *SAIS Review* (Winter-Spring 1999) pp. 92-113; and Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal* (Winter 1998) pp. 32-50.

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Turkey for strikes into northern Iraq.[3] Turkey's participation in the Gulf War stemmed largely, though not exclusively, from a desire to reassert its role and importance in the post-Cold War era. Policymakers in Ankara were apprehensive that the demise of the Soviet threat and East-West rivalries would undermine their country's geo-strategic role in the Western alliance. However, many among the Turkish political and military elites were equally concerned that participation in the Allied coalition would expose Turkey to unnecessary risks from Iraq—a state with which Turkey shares a long border. But President Özal, who was convinced that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait offered an opportunity to demonstrate his country's geo-strategic importance to the West, managed to maneuver Turkey into becoming a central player in the Allied coalition.

The expansion of Turkey's role in the Middle East continued after the end of the Gulf War.[4] The principal reason was the escalation of the campaign of political violence and terrorism by the Kurdish separatist organization, the PKK. The emergence of a power vacuum in northern Iraq following the Gulf War enabled the PKK to establish bases in Iraq close to the Turkish border for strikes against Turkey. Ankara's response to the PKK's challenge was to strengthen its counter-insurgency effort at home and adopt pro-active policies in northern Iraq and toward Syria. Since the early 1990s, Turkish troops have periodically entered northern Iraq in pursuit of the PKK. During these military incursions that have typically lasted several weeks, Turkish jets have bombed suspected PKK bases while ground troops have combed the area in search of PKK militants.

In 1998, Turkey finally decided to send a strong and decisive signal to Syria—a neighboring Arab state that had long provided extensive support to the PKK despite repeated Turkish complaints. Ankara threatened to use military force to secure the expulsion of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, who had been a longtime resident of Damascus. The showdown with Syria, which led to

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[3] On Turkey's Gulf War policy, see Sabri Sayari, "Between Allies and Neighbors: Turkey's Burden Sharing Policy in the Gulf Conflict," in Andrew Bennett, Joseph Lepgold and Danny Unger, *Friends in Need: Burden Sharing in the Gulf War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) pp. 197-218.

[4] On Turkey's policies toward the Middle East in the post-Cold War era, see Henri J. Barkey, ed., *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's Role in the Middle East* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1996); Philip Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1991); and Sabri Sayari, "Turkey and the Middle East in the 1990s," *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Spring 1997) pp. 44-55.

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Öcalan's expulsion from that country, was a notable example of the transition from the reactive foreign policy behavior of the Cold War period to a more pro-active approach to issues that Turkish policymakers perceived to be critical to national security.

The Kurdish issue and the PKK also contributed to Turkey's decision to forge a new security cooperation arrangement with Israel.[5] The signing of a military training and education agreement in 1996 created a formidable new alignment between the region's two militarily strongest states, which had important ramifications for regional balances of power. The Israeli-Turkish agreement was not conceived as a formal alliance and both countries repeatedly stressed that it was not directed against third parties. Nevertheless, one of Turkey's principal motives was to send a signal to Syria about the increased security risks of pursuing adversarial policies, especially its continued support for the PKK. By forging closer ties with Israel, Turkey also expected to improve its military capabilities and technical know-how and find an alternative source for its weapons systems. It faced increased difficulties in obtaining sophisticated weapons from the US due to opposition from anti-Turkish ethnic lobbies and human rights groups in Congress. In addition to these primary objectives, other considerations, such as Turkish expectations of intelligence cooperation with Israel against the PKK and support from the Jewish lobby in Washington, also shaped Turkey's policy on Israeli-Turkish relations. By the end of the decade, what began as military and security cooperation had produced a remarkable increase in the commercial and cultural ties between the region's two non-Arab, democratic and pro-Western states.

EXPECTATIONS VERSUS PERFORMANCE: THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

The rise of the new Turkic republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus after the disintegration of the former Soviet Union provided Turkey with another important opportunity to expand its regional influence through an activist foreign policy.[6] Throughout

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[5] On Israeli-Turkish relations, see Alan Makovsky, "Israeli-Turkish Relations: A Turkish 'Periphery Strategy'?" in Barkey, ed., pp. 147-70; George E. Gruen, "Dynamic Progress in Turkish-Israeli Relations," *Israeli Affairs* (Summer 1995) pp. 40-70; and Daniel Pipes, "A New Axis: The Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente," *National Interest* (Winter 1997-98) pp. 31-38.

the Cold War period, Turkey's relations with Central Asia and the Caucasus were almost nonexistent despite common ethnic and cultural ties. Out of its exaggerated fear of pan-Turkism, Moscow tried to minimize contact between Turkey and the Turkic peoples under its control . For its part, Turkey strictly adhered to Atatürk's policy that defined Turkish national identity exclusively with reference to the Turks living within the country's borders and ruled out the possibility of irredentism.

The emergence of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as independent states ushered in a new phase in Turkey's relations with the countries of Central Asia and the Caspian region, particularly Azerbaijan. In addition to common ethnic and cultural ties, pragmatic policy objectives created a favorable environment for the expansion of political, economic and cultural ties. The leaders of the new Turkic republics turned to Ankara as their principal intermediary in integrating into the international political and economic system, hoping that Ankara's close ties with Washington would enable them to receive US backing in their efforts. Turkish policymakers welcomed the opening up of the Turkic world for equally pragmatic reasons—they believed that closer ties with the new republics would enhance Turkey's regional power and role, prevent Russia and Iran from expanding their influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia and offer Turkey new economic and business opportunities that could benefit the country's export-oriented growth strategy.[7]

The emergence of the Caspian region as potentially one of the largest suppliers of energy in the world and Turkey's own growing demand for natural gas also played an important role in Turkey's search for a larger regional role.[8] A principal objective of Turkish policy was to find new sources of supply to meet its energy requirements and lessen its dependence on Russia as its principal

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[6] On Turkey's relations with Central Asia and the Caucasus, see Sabri Sayari, "Turkey, the Caucasus and Central Asia," in Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner, eds., *The New Geopolitics of Central Asia and Its Borderlands* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994) pp. 175-96; Gareth Winrow, *Turkey in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995); and William Hale, "Turkey, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus," in John F. R. Wright, Suzanne Goldenberg and Richard Schofield, eds., *Transcaucasian Boundaries* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996) pp. 54-70.

[7] Sayari, "Turkey, the Caucasus, and Central Asia," p. 180.

[8] See Temel Iskit, "Turkey: A New Actor in the Field of Energy Politics," *Perceptions* (March-May 1996) pp. 58-82.

supplier of natural gas. Political and strategic considerations also entered into Turkish policies: Turkey viewed Caspian energy development as critical to the regional rivalries between Russia, Iran and Turkey in the competition for political and economic influence in the Caucasus. Additionally, Turkish officials believed that Turkey's emergence as the central link in the proposed East-West energy corridor for the export of Caspian gas and oil to Western markets would enhance its strategic importance to Europe and the United States.

To achieve its objectives, Turkey sought closer political and diplomatic ties with the energy-rich Caspian states, especially Azerbaijan. In 1994, the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC) joined a consortium of oil companies and the government of Azerbaijan (AIOC) that was formed to extract oil from the Caspian Sea fields. TPC, a state-owned company, now holds 6.75 percent equity in the AIOC. To increase its gas imports, Turkey signed a number of bilateral and multilateral agreements with Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. At the same time, Turkey became deeply involved in intense competition for the construction of pipelines to transport Caspian energy to Turkey and Western Europe. Producing states (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan), neighboring countries (primarily Russia, Turkey and Iran), Western oil companies and the United States have been actively seeking to influence the choice concerning the routing of new pipelines. In the 1990s, Ankara spent considerable diplomatic energy, particularly in Washington, to promote the construction of a pipeline from Baku in Azerbaijan to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan as the principal transit route for the export of the Azeri oil to Western markets. Washington has been a supporter of the Baku-Ceyhan project, since it is concerned that Russia would increase its political and strategic leverage in the region if it controls the pipeline routes. Furthermore, cooperation between Washington and Ankara on Caspian energy issues was one of the major items on the agenda of US-Turkish bilateral relations in the 1990s.

Although Turkey sought to expand its role in both the Caucasus and Central Asia, Ankara was far more concerned about the Caucasus. The eruption of ethnic and secessionist conflicts in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Chechnya raised Turkish concerns about their impact on stability and energy security in

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the Caucasus.[9] There was growing apprehension about the possibility of instability spilling over into Turkey, since the ethnic fighting took place close to Turkey's borders and involved Turkic and other Muslim peoples with whom Turkey had historic ties. In addition, there were sizable numbers of Abkhazians, Azeris and Chechens in Turkey who sympathized with their ethnic kindred in the Caucasus. Through their cultural associations, they created a formidable ethnic lobby and pressured the Turkish government to take a stronger stand—possibly involving direct military involvement—on behalf of their respective ethnic communities. Their actions presented Ankara with difficult policy dilemmas, especially regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that led to the occupation of one-fifth of Azerbaijan's territory by the Armenians. Nevertheless, Turkey chose to exercise caution rather than risk involvement in the ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus that could have brought it into a major conflict with Russia.[10] Moreover, the secessionist movements in Georgia and Chechnya had ramifications for Turkey's own Kurdish separatist problem and, Ankara did not wish to find itself in the uncomfortable position of formally supporting separatism near its borders while suppressing it at home.

Turkey's efforts to expand its role and influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia produced mixed results. Turkey succeeded in establishing its presence in the Turkic republics, especially in Azerbaijan, and economic and cultural interactions between Turkey and the Turkic republics have increased significantly in the post-Cold War era. However, earlier expectations that Turkey would become their strongest political and economic partner have not materialized due to numerous factors, including Turkey's limited resources, the absence of common borders (with the exception of Azerbaijan), the Russian presence and role in the region and the reluctance of the leaders of the Turkic republics to become dependent on another country after decades of dependence on Moscow.

In Caspian energy development, Turkey remains an important player. As the fastest growing gas market in the region, it had

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[9] For a more detailed analysis, see Sabri Sayari, "Turkey, Caspian Energy and Regional Security" in Robert Ebel and Rajan Menon, eds., *Energy and Ethnic Conflict in Central Asia and Caucasus* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, forthcoming).

[10] See Svante E. Cornell, "Turkey and the Conflict in Nagorno-Karbakh: A Delicate Balance," *Middle Eastern Studies* (January 1998) pp. 51-72.

little difficulty in finding new potential sources of supply from the Turkic states as well as from Russia and Iran. The future of the Baku-Ceyhan project remains uncertain in the face of the continued reluctance of Western oil companies to finance it, Russian efforts to maintain Moscow's near-monopoly on the flow of Caspian energy to the West and the possibility of the construction of a less expensive pipeline through Iran in the near future.

MULTILATERAL ACTIVISM: THE BALKANS

In contrast to its relations with Central Asia and the Caucasus, Turkey maintained political and economic relations with the Balkan states during the Cold War period. However, its potential role in the Balkans was limited by the control that the former Soviet Union exercised over most parts of the region. Until the 1990s, the Turkish approach to the Balkans was primarily influenced by the challenge that the Warsaw Pact posed to Turkey's security, and to a lesser degree, by the treatment of the ethnic Turkish minorities in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece and Romania. While Turkey and Yugoslavia remained on relatively friendly terms, Turkey's relations with Bulgaria were often strained, partly due to Cold War tensions and also over Bulgaria's ill treatment of its sizeable ethnic Turkish minority. Although Greece was part of the Balkans, Turkey viewed its dispute with Greece over the Aegean and Cyprus largely as a bilateral rather than regional problem.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, there was a discernible increase in Turkey's interest and involvement in the Balkans.[11] This was precipitated by several regional developments. First, the fragmentation of Yugoslavia, accompanied by violent ethno-nationalist conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, seriously undermined regional stability and increased the possibility that a major conflict could spill over into Turkey. To prevent the escalation of the conflicts in the Balkans, Turkey embarked on an activist diplomacy that also included participation in international peacekeeping operations. Second, ethnic conflicts in the region

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[11] On Turkey's policies towards the Balkans in the 1990s, see Ilhan Uzgel, "Doksanlarda Türkiye Icin Bir Işbirliği ve Rekabet Alani Olarak Balkanlar," in Gencer Özcan and Şule Kut, eds., *En Uzun Onyil* (Istanbul: Boyut, 1998) pp. 403-44; Constantine Danopoulos, "Turkey and the Balkans: Searching for Stability," in Constantine Danopoulos and K. Messas, eds., *Crises in the Balkans* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997) pp. 211-24; and Duygu Bazoğlu Sezer, "Turkey in the New Security Environment in the Balkans and Black Sea Region," in Vojtech Mastný and R. Craig Nation, eds., *Turkey Between East and West* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996) pp. 71-96.

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generated extensive interest and concern in Turkey due to the presence of large numbers of Turks who had migrated from the Balkans to Turkey over the years.[12] Third, Turkey's efforts to pursue a more assertive role in Balkan affairs in the post-Cold War era also reflected the influence of Greek-Turkish rivalry and competition for regional political and economic influence. Finally, the cooperation and understanding between the US and Turkey in their approach to regional security issues proved to be instrumental in facilitating greater Turkish activism. The existence of significant overlap in the policy objectives of the two countries played an important role in Turkey's involvement in the Balkans through multilateral, rather than unilateral, initiatives.[13]

The breakdown of regional order and stability that began with the Bosnian crisis and continued with the Kosovo conflict placed the Balkans high on the agenda of Turkey's regional security concerns. Ankara initially opposed the fragmentation of Yugoslavia and criticized EU policies that seemed to encourage this process.[14] In addition to their concern about the potential for the escalation of regional tensions, Turkish policymakers opposed the fragmentation of Yugoslavia due to secessionism since, as with the secessionist movements in the Caucasus, they were apprehensive about its implications for Kurdish separatists and Turkey's territorial integrity. However, as the Serbian ethnic cleansing policy against the Bosnian Muslims intensified and Turkish public opinion became galvanized by watching the unfolding tragedy on their daily television news programs, Turkey began to lobby for a strong Western response to end the Serbian atrocities. In particular, Ankara pushed for military intervention by NATO and strong sanctions against the Milosevic regime in Belgrade. Turkey also provided a limited amount of military aid to the Bosnian Muslims through clandestine channels. Since Turkey was critical of Western, and especially European, equivocation on the Bosnian crisis, it welcomed the US-led effort

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[12] See Kemal Kirişçi, "Post-Second World War Immigration from Balkan Countries to Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey* (Spring 1995) pp. 61-77. It should also be noted that individuals of Balkan origins played a major role in the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic in 1923. Their ranks included the country's founding father Kemal Atatürk. See, Frederick W. Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965).

[13] Uzgel, pp. 409-13.

[14] See Sabri Sayari, "La Turquie et le crise Yugoslave," *Politique Etrangère* (Summer 1992) pp. 309-16.

to end the violence through the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995. Following the Dayton Agreement, Turkey participated in the multilateral UN peacekeeping forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ankara also became a key partner of the United States in training a new military force for the Bosnian Muslim-Croat Federation.

Turkey's Balkan policy of multilateral assertiveness continued with the intensification of the Kosovo conflict in 1998. As in Bosnia, Turkey viewed the Kosovo crisis primarily in terms of its impact on regional stability and order. However, Turkey's response to the conflict between the Kosovar Albanians and the Serbs was notably more restrained than in its response to the Bosnian conflict. This stemmed partly from the fact that the ethnic Turkish minority in Kosovo, numbering approximately 30,000 people, did not ally themselves with the Albanians and had genuine concerns about being dominated by the Albanian majority. Opposition to secessionist movements also contributed to Turkish reticence. Unlike the case of the Bosnian Muslims, Turkey did not actively engage in diplomatic efforts on behalf of the Kosovar Albanians, nor did it seek to become their advocate in international organizations. However, Turkey complied with NATO's decision to use sanctions against Belgrade and deployed a small contingent of F-16 jets in Italy for use in NATO's air campaign. After the fighting came to an end, Turkey contributed 1,000 troops to the UN peacekeeping forces in Kosovo.

The 1990s also witnessed efforts by Turkey to develop closer political, economic and military ties with a number of Balkan states. Turkey's search for a larger regional role through expanded bilateral ties with Albania, Macedonia, Romania and Bulgaria was partly the product of the competition and rivalry between Greece and Turkey. For example, Turkey was the second country to recognize Macedonia as an independent country in 1992 and the first to open an embassy in Skopje a year later, much to the anger and frustration of Greece, which objected to Macedonia's name and flag and sought to prevent its international recognition. Greece's policies helped solidify Macedonian-Turkish ties that resulted in the signing of a military cooperation agreement between the two countries.

Following the downfall of their communist regimes, Albania and Bulgaria sought closer relations with Turkey. During the early part of the 1990s, there was intense diplomatic activity between Ankara and Tirana that included visits by high-ranking political

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and military officials. As a predominantly Muslim state that had once been part of the Ottoman Empire, Albania welcomed Turkish pledges of greater economic and military aid. Turkey provided considerable military assistance to Albania that included the training of officers for the Albanian military and the construction of a naval base on the Adriatic Sea. But economic relations between the two countries remained limited, especially in comparison with the growth of Italian and Greek business interests in Albania.

As noted earlier, tensions and problems throughout the Cold War years marked Turkey's relations with Bulgaria. The post-Cold War era saw a remarkable transformation of this adversarial relationship as the two neighboring countries sought to foster closer political and economic ties. The end of repressive policies against Bulgaria's 1.5 million Turkish minority by the newly elected democratic government in Sofia was the principal catalyst for a new era of cooperation and friendly relations. Turkey's trade with Bulgaria increased significantly despite the acute problems that the Bulgarian economy faced. High-level official visits, the signing of a Treaty of Friendship and Turkey's support for Bulgaria's membership in NATO were among the significant signs of the improving relations between the two countries.

CONCLUSION

Turkey's activist foreign policy orientation in the 1990s was prompted by a multiplicity of factors. First, Turkish policymakers were worried about their country's geo-strategic importance to the West. These concerns were heightened by Europe's reluctance to admit Turkey as a full member of the European Union. Also, the rise of political instability, war and ethnic conflict near Turkey's borders in the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans prompted Ankara to become involved in these regions to an extent unprecedented in recent history. The leadership of Turgut Özal, whose tenure in office from 1989 to 1993 was marked by new regional foreign policy initiatives, proved to have a lasting influence on Turkey's pursuit of activist and assertive policies during the rest of the decade. In the case of the Balkans and the Caucasus, Turkey's focus on regional developments also reflected the influence of the diaspora communities in Turkey in mobilizing public opinion on regional conflicts.

Turkey's efforts to adjust to changes in the international system

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brought about by the end of the Cold War have enhanced its regional role and importance. This has enabled Turkish policy-makers to overcome some of their concerns and worries about the impact of the end of the Cold War on Turkey. Developments in the 1990s, ranging from the Gulf War to Caspian energy development, have shown that Turkey possesses a unique asset that only major powers in world politics have. Namely, it can play an important role in numerous regions as well as in trans-regional issues such as energy security and weapons proliferation. A number of influential US strategic thinkers have argued that despite the changes brought about in world politics by the end of the Cold War, Turkey remains one of the most important countries to US strategies in Eurasia and the Middle East.[15]

Turkey's ability to expand its regional involvement was facilitated by internal and external factors. As one observer has noted, the country's economic progress and the modernization of its military in the 1990s came at a time when most of the neighboring states such as Syria, Iraq, Iran and Russia were in decline economically and militarily.[16] The changing military balance between Turkey and its neighbors has been an important factor in Turkey's ability to pursue pro-active and assertive policies on issues that it considers to be of vital national interest. At the same time, post-Cold War developments such as the Gulf War or the emergence of the Turkic republics in Central Asia and Azerbaijan have created new opportunities for Turkey to play a larger role in several areas.

It would be erroneous to view Turkey's response to the changes brought about by the end of the Cold War as a strategy to establish its hegemony and dominance near its borders, to reconstruct a neo-Ottoman regional order or to revive pan-Turkic aspirations. Ankara's principal objectives have been to maintain its geo-strategic importance in global politics, ensure regional stability, prevent ethnic conflicts from spilling over into its territory and gain new markets to fuel its strategy of export-based economic growth. In pursuing these objectives, Turkey has had to balance

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[15] See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Robert Chase, Emily Hill and Paul Kennedy, "Pivotal States and U.S. Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* (January-February 1996) pp. 33-51; and Zalmay Khalilzad, "Why the West Needs Turkey?" *Wall Street Journal*, 22 December 1997.

[16] Makovsky, "The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy," pp. 95-100.

activist policies with cautious approaches. This has created policy dilemmas, especially when public opinion demanded greater activism on behalf of Turkic and other Muslim communities involved in ethno-national conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus.

Turkey's post-Cold War behavior in international affairs has highlighted the increased salience of the linkages between domestic politics and foreign policy. In this respect, the most critical linkage has been in the Kurdish issue, which caused strains in Turkey's relations with its Western allies over human rights and caused serious tensions with neighboring states such as Syria, Iran and Greece. It has also figured prominently in Turkey's policies in northern Iraq and toward Syria. Turkey's opposition to separatist movements by Turkic and other Muslim groups in the Balkans and the Caucasus has been largely the product of its concern for the PKK's challenge to Turkey's territorial integrity.

The ascendancy of political Islam and the polarization between the Islamists and the secularists in the 1990s constitute another important link between domestic and foreign policy. The brief and crisis-ridden tenure of an Islamist-led coalition government between 1996 and 1997 witnessed an attempt by the Islamist Welfare Party to establish closer ties with the Islamic world, specifically Iran and Libya. Welfare's foreign policy initiatives did not radically alter Turkey's pro-Western foreign policy orientation, but they did intensify the conflict between the country's secularist and Islamist political forces. The Turkish military, which has been the staunchest defender of secularist principles, led the opposition to Welfare's policies. In a move that was obviously meant to embarrass the Islamists—who had long been bitterly critical of Israel and Turkey's ties with the Jewish state—the military engineered the signing of the historic agreement with Israel in 1996. Thus, the Israeli-Turkish strategic alignment had important implications for Turkey's domestic politics.

Finally, Turkey witnessed a rising tide of nationalist sentiments in the aftermath of the Cold War. The resurgence of ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus kindled nationalist sentiments in Turkey since they involved Muslim and Turkic communities with whom Turkey has long had close historic and cultural ties. Their plight and suffering, and the initial Western indifference to the Bosnian tragedy, galvanized nationalist, pro-Islamic and anti-Western sentiments in Turkey. Additionally, the PKK's campaign

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of violence and the rise of radical Kurdish nationalism caused a strong backlash in Turkey and a sharp increase in Turkish nationalist sentiments. That nationalism had become the most important ideological force in Turkish electoral politics became evident in the 1999 parliamentary elections, when two strongly nationalist parties, the center-left Democratic Left Party and the far-right Nationalist Action Party came in first and second respectively at the polls. The strengthening of nationalist tendencies in Turkish politics has thus far had its most visible impact on foreign policy in the strong public support for Turkey's actions during the crisis with Syria over the Öcalan affair in 1998.

Turkey is likely to continue its search for a greater regional political and economic role in the near future. It should be remembered, however, that despite its increased involvement in the neighboring regions, Turkey's principal strategic, political and economic relations continue to be with the United States and Western Europe. As the preceding analysis suggests, the strengthening of its ties with the West has been the primary motivating force for much of Turkey's recent activism in the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Although Turkish policymakers view the development of political and economic relations with these regions favorably, they do not consider them to be substitutes for Turkey's nearly half century-long close ties with the United States and Western Europe. ♣