

# **Turkey: facing a new millennium**

Coping with  
intertwined conflicts



AMIKAM NACHMANI

# **TURKEY: FACING A NEW MILLENNIUM**



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Since September 2000, vicious, beastly and brutal terror attacks have been launched in my country. My neighborhood in Jerusalem has been attacked, as have Bar-Ilan University and the Hebrew University. Writing a book on Turkey in the 1990s turned to be the most prudent means to remain sane.

Amikam Nachmani  
Bar-Ilan University

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIOC	Azerbaijan International Operating Company
AJC	American Jewish Committee
ANAP	Anavatan Partisi
BSECR/BSEC	Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region
CBM	Confidence Building Measures
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPC	Caspian Pipeline Consortium
CPJ	Committee for the Protection of Journalists
CRS	Congressional Research Service
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Daily News Bulletin</i>
DSP	Demokratik Sol Partisi
EMU	European Monetary Union
ERNK	National Liberation Front of Kurdistan
EU	European Union
FIR	Flight Information Region
FP	Fazilet Partisi
FSA	Freedom Support Act
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
FYROM	Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia
GAP	Southeastern Anatolia Project
GDP	gross domestic product
GNP	gross national product
HADEP	People's Democracy Party
IAI	Israel Aircraft Industry
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMKB	Istanbul Stock Exchange
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi
MIT	Turkey's National Intelligence Organization
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	non-commissioned officers
NEM	newly emerging market
NIC	newly industrialized country
NOTAM	Notice to Airman
NSC	National Security Council
PAN	International Organization of Authors and Poets
PCB	Polychlorinatedbiphenyl
PKK	Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan



PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
RP	Refah Partisi
SEEBRIG	South East European Brigade
<i>TDN</i>	<i>Turkish Daily News</i>
TICA	Turkish International Cooperation Agency
TL	Turkish lira
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UDD	Unified Defence Doctrines
UN	United Nations

## INTRODUCTION

It has been said that Turkey's participation in the Korean War in the 1950s bought it the entrance ticket into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Forty years later, in 1991, Turkey participated in the Gulf War. Not a single Turkish soldier crossed the Iraqi–Turkish border, yet the six or so Turkish divisions that were deployed along the border drew off Iraqi forces from the Kuwaiti battlefield. This was meant by Turkey's late President, Turgut Ozal, to pave the way towards his country's accession into the European Union (EU). Was there any connection between the 1991 war in the Gulf and the December 1999 EU Helsinki decision to invite Turkey to negotiate its entrance into the Union? Perhaps not a direct one, but one cannot fail to see that the 1990s were marked by crossroads, developments, events, etc., which linked the two dates, perhaps even led to the December 1999 decision. This study will attempt to analyze these years.

The 1990s were successful years as regards Ankara's foreign relations. Turkey manifested its ability to withstand the repercussions of the fall of communism, to stop the temporary devaluation in its strategic importance that resulted from the waning of the cold war and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, to avoid becoming embroiled in the ethnic upheavals in Central Asia, the Balkans and the Middle East, to prevent an eruption of yet another cycle in Cyprus and in the Aegean Sea, etc. Turkey managed also to develop close relations with its ethnically related Asian Turkic peoples, seemingly without becoming sidetracked from its declared hopes of becoming integrated into the European and Western worlds. Similarly, Turkey's first politically Muslim Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan, did not Islamize its foreign policy, nor did he bring excessive Muslim policies to bear on its domestic affairs.

The 1990s were also successful for Turkey internally, although here the results are clearly more mixed. The Kurdish revolt has been curbed, the Turkish economy has achieved some important gains, secular–religious disagreements have not worsened, and wider circles – hitherto not a party to the decision-making procedures in Turkey – have taken part in municipal, national and political processes. Democracy in Turkey has successfully coped with various political and constitutional crises, the observing of human and civil rights by the authorities has improved and features of civil society have become stronger. True, changes and improvements are still needed, the economy gravely faltered towards the end of the decade and further respect of human rights must continue, yet many achievements are clearly discernible, some are indeed outstanding.

Our study centers on several key internal and external aspects of Turkey in the 1990s. Turkey's role in the Gulf War and its wake is discussed in detail in Chapter 1. Comprehending this role and its wake helps in understanding some major developments in Turkey's relations with the United States, Europe, Russia, the Hellenic world, Central Asia, the Arab Middle East, Iran, Israel, etc. Turkey's relations with Greece at the end of the 1990s (Chapter 6) are a direct outcome of the political and strategic changes – global and regional – occurring around Turkey from the late 1980s, and which have intensified since the Gulf War. The weakening of Turkey's adversaries – the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the collapse of communism, the defeat of Iraq in the Gulf War, the weakening of Syria, the collapse of the Kurdish PKK revolt, etc. – have all left Greece to face alone an otherwise conflict-free Turkey. Because, according to Athens, a conflict-ridden Turkey is more dangerous to Greece, the result was a dramatic change in the Greco-Turkish conflict. Apparently there is no more Greek alienation of Turkey but an attempt to extricate concessions from her through dialogue and cooperation.

Chapter 7 of our work deals with the newly emerged Turkish–Israeli cooperation. A bridge has been built over the Middle East, comprising the two strongest parties in the region. Suffice it to say that the largest civil trade of any pair of Middle Eastern countries – be it oil-producing countries and their trade with each other or any two Middle Eastern countries and their bilateral trade – is between Israel and Turkey. This surprising development adds a more solid element to the much publicized Turkish–Israeli military cooperation, implying long-term relations, even if Middle Eastern military and political circumstances change.

Chapter 2 centers on the Kurdish problem and the victory Turkey gained over the PKK. When Turkey's external circumstances became more favorable, when the country's conflicts with its neighbors waned, when Turkey's opponents and adversaries weakened or practically collapsed or even disappeared (communism and the Soviet Union), the area was open for Turkey to deal with internal issues, chief among them being the PKK revolt. Turkey crushed the PKK armed uprising; the Turkish–Kurdish issue still awaits a resolution. Chapter 3 discusses the ambivalent relations between the EU and Turkey and the economic aspects of this. Both sides feel inhibitions: in many respects Turkey differs from the EU which is at pains to see the common grounds between the two and not harp on the dissimilarities. Turkey, too, has its reservations as to the amount of change and alterations she should apply before being acceded to the EU. "Will it remain the same Turkey?" ask the Turks. Chapter 4 focuses on issues related to identity and nationalism. The subjects discussed are Turkish nationalism and Islam, the encounter between Turkey and the Turkic peoples in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and the conflict with Syria over the latter's support of the PKK. These issues were reflected in the general elections of April 1999. Chapter 5 deals with the major international encounters the country experiences during the 1990s: relations with Russia, energy issues, Central

Asian gas and oil, relations with the United States and their impact on issues of human rights.

In conclusion we will attempt to analyze the prospects for Turkey in the twenty-first century. We might say that Turkey's political and strategic status seems to be solid – a regional actor with a say in Middle Eastern, Balkan, European and Central Asian affairs. The country's leadership should be complimented for avoiding becoming embroiled in the conflicts around it. Temptations were high to become “a regional policeman” (see Chapter 1); very prudently Ankara brushed aside all such offers. Furthermore, when Western Europe is the much sought-after vision, Asian bickering, conflicts and even possible warring therein with Russia or Iran have been left to others. Turkey's integration in Europe and in the West seems to grow stronger as Turkey's external adversaries and internal conflicts become weaker and appear to be less threatening. In case Europe develops closer relations with Turkey, it (Europe) should not be concerned that it imports into its own ranks the conflicts mentioned here. Comparison is almost inevitable: Turkey's European ambitions and achievements get more credit as her Balkan, Arab and Asian neighbors drift more and more towards intolerance, radicalism, less democracy, and Third World manifestations. Likewise, Turkey's integration in Europe becomes stronger as long as its internal features seem to be less problematic. For instance, the ending of the struggle with the Kurds gives hopes for a decrease in military influence over civil matters. Thus, a Turkey that strategically and politically looks confident and deters attempts to harm it, which will not export its external problems or its ethnic strife, which will be more ready and willing to deal with its internal issues – such a Turkey will be more welcomed in Europe. Indeed, as seen from the *fin de siècle*, it seems that Turkey's leadership, after buttressing the country's integration and borders, is ready to cope with its domestic issues. With a rare frankness and with unique sincerity – unique for a leader, extremely rare for a politician – Turkey's President, Suleiman Demirel, admitted the following:

Twenty-nine percent of the women in my country are still unable to read and write by the time they are 15 years of age. Do you have a project to solve this problem? The great majority of women in Turkey are unaware of the concept of gynecological health. Do you have a project to solve this? In my country, 43 children out of every 10,000 die during birth. Do you have a project to prevent that?

I just talked to the authorities. There are 21 cases of polio in my country. This number is zero in many countries, but I have 21 cases to deal with. I am so ashamed that I don't know what to do. Let's get together and try to find a solution for these problems. In my country only one out of every four people brush their teeth. This has nothing to do with money or wealth. Let's concentrate on every household in all of Turkey. Do you have a project to solve these problems? No, there isn't one.

We constructed highways from one end of Turkey to the other and provided electric power to every corner in the country. We have erected schools, universities and hospitals. But I am still concerned about what kind of life a particular city, country

or village leads. We were in a much worse situation 50 years ago. I fully understand that, but we have much to accomplish to arrive at a much better condition.<sup>1</sup>

As the Contents shows, the book focuses on aspects relevant to Turkey's external and internal affairs. During the 1990s Turkey coped successfully with foreign matters, simultaneously dealing with domestic issues. At the beginning of a new century the country appears more capable to concentrate on finding remedies for its internal problems.

## Note

- 1 Interview, *Turkish Daily News*, 16 March 1999.

# 1

## Turkey and the Gulf War Coping with intertwined conflicts

In a 1992 issue of *Time* magazine, in an article on Turkey, the writer inserted the following “ad” in the middle:

### Help Wanted

Nation to serve as go-between for the Western world and the Middle East and assist in turning suspicion into cooperation. Must be firm U.S.–European ally desirous of still closer ties yet, Islamic in religion and culture, capable of serving as a role model of secularized Western democracy for other Muslim states. Ethnic links with some of those states, booming free-market economy, permitting some assistance to poorer brethren highly desirable. Benefits: regional superpower within a few years; eventual major influence on wider world affairs possible.

To which the article’s author observed, “There is no need to look for such a country: Turkey fits every specification. Moreover, it wants the job.”<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will look at Turkey before and after the Gulf War, starting in the mid-1980s and concluding at the end of the 1990s. It will examine, among other things, the *Time* writer’s glib assertion of Turkey’s unequivocal readiness to serve as the West’s policeman in the Middle East.

The fifteen-year period under consideration confronted Turkey with an assortment of problems, whose ramifications are vital for an understanding of Ankara’s moves during the Gulf crisis, in the war itself, and in the course of the 1990s. Among these problems were the apparent decline in Turkey’s strategic value due to the decline in inter-bloc rivalries; Turkey’s wearisome – and, some will add, fruitless – courtship of the EU; the Greco-Turkish conflict over Cyprus; disputes with Iraq and Syria over water resources; the persistent territorial quarrel with Syria over the Hatay province (Alexandretta to the Syrians); and Iraq’s debt to Turkey (2–3 billion dollars). Other issues relevant to our discussion are Turkey’s domestic policies; the country’s conflict with its Kurdish minority; President Turgut Ozal’s status in Turkish politics; the Islam-state relationship

in Turkey; Turkish nationalism; Turkey's commitment to the West and its democratic values; and Turkey's relations with the Arab and Central Asian worlds.

### **Background: Turkey and the West**

For as long as the cold war was simmering, Turkey was crucial to American strategic interests. The 1947 Truman Doctrine, while ostensibly relating to Greece and its preservation from communist insurgency, was aimed primarily at foiling a communist takeover of Turkey, which the United States saw as a far graver threat to its Middle Eastern interests. Were Greece to fall, so feared the United States, Turkey would be the next "domino" in line. Since the communist threat to Greece was internal, massive economic aid was poured into the country, alongside military assistance. But for Turkey, where the communist threat was external, massive military aid was provided. When, in the course of time, the Turkish–Greek conflict became exacerbated, Athens could point to the immediate post-Second World War period as the source of its weakness vis-à-vis Turkey. The external communist threat to Turkey resulted in Turkey acquiring an offensive military capacity, whereas Greece, facing an internal threat, acquired a defensive capacity, at most.

Ever since the Second World War, Turkey has advocated the physical presence of British or American forces in the Middle East. Turkey opposed the partition of Palestine largely because it entailed Britain's withdrawal from that country. It opposed Britain's evacuation of the Suez Canal Zone and, naturally, Greek demands for "Enosis" with Cyprus, which would have removed British units from the island. Turkey is the only country in the region to sanction the physical presence of US troops on its soil. For the same reason – the maintenance of a Western presence in the Middle East – Turkey also supported the continuation of French rule in Algeria.

In 1958, when the American marines landed in Beirut, one of the objectives of the operation was to remove a pro-Soviet Syrian–Nasserist threat to Turkey's south. At the time, Turkey looked on in dread at the Soviet takeover of the Middle East. There were no lack of examples: the July 1958 coup in Iraq led by Abdul Karim Kassim; the Soviet penetration of Syria and Egypt by means of the Czech–Egyptian arms deal and Soviet financing of the Aswan Dam; the instability of pro-Western regimes in Jordan and Lebanon; the loss of British and French influence in the Middle East and North Africa. Only the dispatch of American and British forces to Jordan and Lebanon managed to reassure Turkey. The country collaborated fully by providing bases on its territory (Adana) from which these forces could take off.<sup>2</sup>

It is significant to note the declaration of then US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in the autumn of 1957. It was just few months before Syria and Egypt united (February 1958), and before the marines landed in Beirut, but Egyptian troops were already deployed along the Turkish–Syrian border: "[It is]

Turkey [which] now faces a growing military danger from the major build-up of arms in Syria.” Depicting that state of affairs as a threat to Turkey was, by all accounts, an exaggeration: most of the Syrian army, then numbering 50,000 men, was deployed along the Israeli border or in and around Damascus as a shield against *coup d'état* attempts; its equipment, albeit modern, had yet to be properly integrated. On the other hand, Turkey boasted an army of half a million men. It was NATO's largest land force, trained and armed over the past decade by the Americans and backed by NATO guarantees, and was massed in force on the Syrian border.<sup>3</sup> The primary objective of the subsequent dispatch of marines to Beirut – the United States' second major intervention in the Middle East (the Truman Doctrine was the first) – was to bolster the tottering Lebanese and Jordanian regimes. Yet, in American eyes, Turkey was also being threatened by Egypt's Nasser and the pro-Soviet regime in Damascus. Once again, removing a threat from Turkey formed a major, if not the principal impetus behind the American action.

Washington was always convinced that as long as communism existed, Turkey was one of its most important assets. Its geo-political location as a buffer between the Soviet Union and the Middle East ensured that Soviet influence in the region remained limited, without territorial expansion. As Bernard Lewis and Dankwart Rustow claim, the fact that Israel, in all its conflicts with Syria, encountered Soviet weaponry but never Soviet troops, can be attributed to this Turkish buffer. The same Turkish territorial buffer may be credited with the relative ease with which Arab states could switch from apparent Soviet influence to a major overture towards Washington. By comparison, it is manifest that where-soever such a barrier was non-existent, any bid to erode Soviet positions was promptly nipped in the bud by Soviet troops: Hungary in 1956; Czechoslovakia in 1968; Afghanistan in 1989. Furthermore, since the early 1980s, Turkey had been an island of relative sanity in a hostile and unpredictable world in which neutral Afghanistan became a Soviet satellite, where Andreas Papandreou's Greece was growing erratic, and where Iran, once *the bulwark* of Western defence in the Middle East, toppled the Shah and unleashed a torrent of hostility towards the West. These developments, when added to Turkey's oft-expressed commitment to Western values, something not linked to one political personality or another, meant small wonder that Washington was eager, when necessary, to rush to its ally's aid.<sup>4</sup>

The end of the cold war changed all this. Like other countries that had been in the forefront of the battle against communism, Turkey found that its political and strategic value to Washington had, sadly, diminished. Beginning with Gorbachev's rise to power in the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s, Ankara was made aware that the worth of its geo-political assets were declining in Western eyes. Consequently, and with a frequency worrisome from a Turkish point of view, issues and matters over which the West had refrained from exerting pressure began surfacing on the agenda of Ankara's dealings with Washington and the West European capitals: the Turkish–Greek standoff over Cyprus; the Turkish



army's frequent intervention in domestic politics; Turkey's questionable human rights and freedom of expression records; its maltreatment of the Kurdish minority; and longstanding allegations about Turkey's role – including government officials – in drug smuggling into Europe and the United States (“The multi-billion Turkish ‘drug economy’”).<sup>5</sup> How reliable our friends in Washington really are, was something that the Turks often wondered. The rise of America's anti-aid body, which sees the end of the cold war as a reason for cutting aid to Turkey, was another warning. It signaled to Ankara that a new era has emerged. The results of this period of Turkish discomfort were evident.

In the past, whenever disagreements seemed to mar Turkey's relations with the United States, Ankara could resort to improving – or threatening to do so – its relations with Moscow. This was the ploy adopted during the various Cyprus crises, and in the 1960s and 1970s, when the United States campaigned extensively against what it perceived as Turkey's share in drug-smuggling. Turkey considered a similar move when she realized the poor performance of the Americans in Vietnam; relying solely on Washington looked problematic following the American inability to win the war. But the end of the cold war robbed Turkish foreign policy of this useful dodge. The end of the cold war also inspired the US decision to dismantle its major military bases in Turkey – leaving only one US/NATO base in Incirlik – often to the great disappointment of local communities for whom the bases were an important source of income. This, also, deprived Ankara of yet another important instrument of political leverage over Washington.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Turkey's relations with Europe and the EU were seldom harmonious. Turkish workers who had sought employment in large numbers in the wealthier countries of Western Europe, principally Germany, were encountering increasing hostility. Host countries preferred East Germans or East Europeans to Turkish workers. The number of work visas allotted to Turks – as to North Africans or Asians – was frozen or even reduced. This had a detrimental effect on Turkey, as economic immigration, serving as a vital social and economic safety valve, had allowed the country to cope, to a degree, with its unemployment and soaring inflation. Turkey's high inflation rate (officially set at 65–100 percent annually in recent years), along with European preference for investment in Eastern Europe, have not facilitated the creation of additional jobs in Turkey.

The 1980s were not easy years in connection with Turkey's relations with Western Europe. Turkey's pursuit of its European aspirations, i.e., membership of the EU, kept running into difficulties about the stability of Turkish democracy, the army's role in domestic politics, civic freedom and individual rights. Even when Turkey met the EU membership terms – reduction of subsidies and customs duties, restrictions on agriculture and emigration to EU countries, etc. – Europe continued to fall back on a Greek veto to keep Turkey out. As will be seen, Turkey seized upon the Gulf crisis as an opportunity to improve its standing in Europe and to break out of its isolation.

**Background: Turkey and Iraq – oil, water, the Kurds**

Turkish–Iraqi relations were notable for cooperation and correctness. There were the Sadabad pact of 1937 and the Baghdad Treaty of 1955.<sup>7</sup> There were ramified bilateral trade relations developed during the Iran–Iraq war (1980–88). Yet, by the late 1980s it seemed as though the two neighbors were set on a collision course.

From an Iraqi point of view, Turkey represented a dangerous dependency in relation to oil and water. About 96 percent of Iraq's income was from oil exports and when the Gulf route was closed to oil tankers during the Iran–Iraq War, almost 100 percent of Iraq's oil – 80 million tons annually – was exported via the 986 km long pipeline to Turkey's Mediterranean port of Yumurtalik. Transportation time was thus reduced from forty-five days to two. For years the Yumurtalik route has been the only one functioning and, during non-tension times, was one of only two outlets for Iraqi oil exports, the other being the Gulf terminal of Mina al-Bakr. Normally, 56 percent of Iraqi oil export was ferried to Yumurtalik. However, a case in point that justifies the assertion that Baghdad's Middle East hegemonic aspirations could not tolerate being dependent on Turkey in, was the reluctance of the Iraqis to reopen the Kerkuk–Yumurtalik pipeline. In the summer of 1993 Baghdad insisted that she would prefer the Mina al-Bakr route in any future arrangement that would allow her to re-export oil. It seems that Baghdad refused to put Turkey again in the influential position of controlling its oil export. It could produce the same result as Turkey did in August 1990, following the Iraqi invasion into Kuwait, when Ankara shut down the Yumurtalik outlet in accordance with United Nations (UN) resolutions.<sup>8</sup> (On oil and the mentality of Saddam Hussein and those around him we can learn from the remarks of Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Foreign Minister. During the course of the Iran–Iraq war, he was asked why Iraq attacked oil tankers from countries friendly to Iraq that were buying oil from Iran. He replied that Iraq wanted more international pressure to end the war, and “the way to get people to do what you want is to hurt them”).<sup>9</sup>

This dependency explains Iraqi silence in the face of Turkey's damming of the Euphrates which, although begun in the early 1980s, only drew Baghdad's protests in 1988, when its war with Iran was over. In 2020, when Turkey completes its Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) – harnessing the rivers Tigris and Euphrates for the development of Turkey's southeastern provinces – the flow of water into Iraq will be cut by 80 percent. Iraq's silence stemmed also from Turkey serving as its principal import gateway, almost the only one in emergencies, through which Iraq shipped-in some 75 percent of its foodstuffs.<sup>10</sup>

The Iraqi–Turkish water dispute alone contains the potential for a violent confrontation. Welling up in Turkey, the Tigris and Euphrates flow south to Syria and Iraq. Turkey's development plans for its southeastern provinces rest upon the two rivers as an important component, particularly the Euphrates (whose flow is 32 billion cubic meters annually; 31 billion for the Tigris). Turkey

uses half of the Euphrates water, leaving the remainder, 500 cubic meters a second, to its two southern neighbors. Moreover, Ankara stresses that she actually lets 700 cubic meters a second flow to Syria, an amount, so argue the Turks, the Syrians could not absorb owing to their poor infrastructure. Euphrates water not consumed by Turkey is divided between Iraq, who receives 58 percent, and Syria, who draws 42 percent. Conversely, most of the Tigris water is consumed by Iraq. However, the Tigris and Euphrates lose more than 40 percent of their flow by the time they reach Syria and 90 percent by the time they reach Iraq, i.e. after Syria has taken its share. Also, to Turkey, a country otherwise lacking its own energy resources, the two rivers are a source of cheap and clean hydroelectric power, another reason why Turkey maintains its monopoly over the rivers.<sup>11</sup>

The Southeastern Anatolia Development Project (GAP), including the Ataturk Dam, the world's fourth largest, will generate electricity and irrigate 2.5 million acres of land. Completion of the project will further halve – i.e. will leave one-quarter – the amount of water carried south by the Euphrates into Syria and Iraq. Cultivation of additional Turkish lands will increase pollution of the Euphrates' remaining water, further restricting its use by Syrian and Iraqi farmers. The danger is that pollution of the Euphrates by minerals, herbicides, chemicals and waste from Turkish soil will render 2.5 million acres of Iraqi agricultural land unusable within a generation. Moreover, completion of the Ataturk Dam and the inundation of its basin to the north are expected to bring on an ecological calamity analogous to that inflicted by the Aswan Dam. The reservoir will retain the biological wealth and natural materials stored in the water, while the quality of flow south into Syria and Iraq will deteriorate. Fertilization of farmland in those countries, hitherto accomplished naturally by its irrigation with Euphrates water, will henceforth have to be carried out by artificial means, making cultivation more expensive and, ultimately, polluting the soil with chemicals and salts.

Tripartite Turkish–Iraqi–Syrian conventions during 1990 proved fruitless. Iraq and Syria demanded a political treaty, as well as sharing arrangements for the water of the Euphrates, which they claimed to be an international waterway. But Turkey argued that since the river was Turkish, its assets could not be shared. The amount of water it allots its neighbors was its own business and a purely technical issue. Furthermore, Turkey insisted on an end to irrigation by open channels and flooding in Iraq and Syria, a wasteful technique that increases loss of water through evaporation. As the Turkish press maintained:

We should be clear: the water of the Euphrates is ours and we can give away only what we do not need. Water is not something that we can permit to flow away. We are the lucky ones in the Middle East. So we have to make the maximum use of this potential. Water is as important as oil. The day may not be far off when Turkey starts filling bottles with water and marketing them in the Middle East.<sup>12</sup>

In private conversation, even harsher tones could be heard: “They have oil, we have water; let them drink their oil,” was a common refrain in Turkish political

circles. “What does Syria need more water for anyway?” wondered Deniz Baikal, Turkish former Foreign Minister, remarking snidely that it was probably “in order to wash its hands of terrorism.” And President Demirel was reported having a very useful solution to the dispute, namely, that “the water is ours on this side of the border and theirs on the other side.”<sup>13</sup>

As for their common Kurdish problem, for decades Turkey and Iraq worked hand in hand imposing restrictions on the Kurds living within their borders (approximately up to one-fifth of the population in each country, altogether around 25 million in Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran, and in the republics of the ex-Soviet Union – mainly Armenia – making it, globally, “the largest stateless, self-described nation”).<sup>14</sup> During the 1980s, Iraqi Kurds rebelled against Baghdad while its army was tied down in the war with Iran. The end of the war was approaching (a UN-supervised truce came into effect in August 1988), and Baghdad felt free to deal with the Kurdish rebellion. Its treatment was harsh, even by Iraqi standards, and included the Halabjah village incident (March 1988) in which chemical weapons were employed in a barbaric way. Soon, much to Ankara’s dismay, some 100,000 Kurdish refugees, fearing for their lives, fled across the border into Turkey.

Though not plainly expressed, since the early 1980s Iraq permitted the Turkish army to operate against the Kurds in northern Iraq. Baghdad had to “swallow,” with hardly a gulp, these Turkish occasional anti-Kurdish incursions into its territory. Prevented from imposing its authority on northern Iraq – first, because of its long war with Iran and, later, because of the “Safe Haven” policy (or “Safe Zone” – see pp. 38–40), imposed by the United States and its Gulf war allies – Iraq practically owes its territorial integrity to the whims of Ankara. Turkey resents a too strong Kurdish “Safe Haven;” without those incursions, the Kurds would have wrested larger areas of northern Iraq. Turkish troops have been sent occasionally in their thousands to the “Safe Haven” to hold back Iraqi Kurds fleeing from Saddam; these potential refugees are not welcome in Turkey. Nor can these incursions be dismissed as irrelevant: in March 1995 and in May 1997, some 35,000 soldiers were involved – the largest contingent of Turkish troops ever to fight on foreign territory (including its participation in the Korean War in 1950 and its intervention in Cyprus in 1974).<sup>15</sup>

The Turkoman minority of Northern Iraq is yet another divisive issue, which elicits much Iraqi–Turkish acrimony. According to Turkey, there are some 3 million Turkomans living in Iraq, though Western experts put their number at the much more modest 200,000–300,000. They are the third ethnic group among Iraq’s 18 million, together with the Arabs and Kurds, and with strong ethnic ties to Turkey. Baghdad regards them as a Fifth Column – it remains convinced that they are no less and, perhaps, thanks to their powerful Turkish patron, even more of a danger to its integrity than the Kurds. Iraq is particularly concerned over their location near the oil territory of Mosul, Erbil, and Kerkuk, to which Turkey has historical claims. (Kerkuk and Mosul were allotted to Iraq in 1925 by the League of Nations, as its share of the war booty from the

vanquished Ottoman Empire. On occasion, there are calls in Turkey for restoration of these areas.)<sup>16</sup> The Iraqi method of dealing with groups of a different ethnic background – relinquishing identity, culture and rights, destruction of villages, and removal of the population to the interior, i.e. forced relocation, forced assimilation and forced Arabization – was also applied here, to the detriment of Turkish–Iraqi relations. The situation has become even more complex with the practical autonomy that the Kurds enjoy in northern Iraq. Occasionally, this results in attempts at Kurdification of Turkomans living there.

Iraq's debt to Turkey was yet another cause of conflict, albeit insufficient in itself to draw the two states into confrontation. But when compounded with other elements it helped further exacerbate bilateral relations. After its war with Iran, Iraq was left with debts of 80 billion dollars – 40 billion to Arab oil producers plus 40 billion to non-Arab creditors, who all insisted on quick repayment. Iraq owed Turkey some 2.5 billion dollars, of which it had paid off some 600 million by August 1990, when it ceased payments. It made payment resumption contingent upon the resolution of the conflict between Turkey, Iraq and Syria over the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates.<sup>17</sup>

Turkey responded to the events enumerated here, and the profusion of Iraqi–Turkish conflicts, actual and potential, by increasing its defense budget. In 1989, the allotment stood at 1.7 billion dollars. In 1990, even before the Gulf crisis erupted, it was doubled to 3.4 billion, rising in 1991 to 4.8 billion, or 12.5 percent of the overall national budget. Turkey was continually strengthening its army – the possibility of a showdown with Baghdad has never been excluded. A comparison with the defense budget for 1995, three years after Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War, shows a reduction to 3.9 billion. In 2000 and 2001, with Iraq practically free since 1998 of UN inspection on weapons of mass destruction and once again threatening the region's stability, the amount spent in Turkey on defense grew to 7.6 and 7.2 billion dollars, respectively.

At the end of the 1990s most of Turkey's major defense procurement projects survived, despite the cuts that resulted from the devastating earthquakes of 1999. The quake left at least 17,000 dead, 30,000 injured, 500,000 homeless and was estimated to have caused 12–15 billion dollars worth of destruction and the gross domestic product (GDP) to contract by 5–10 percent. International and ethnic threats to Turkey from the unstable Balkans, Caucasus and Middle East, with specific references to Iraq, Iran and Syria, plus the need to protect the Aegean, Mediterranean, and Black Seas all justified Turkey's increased military spending.<sup>18</sup>

In the next twenty-five years Turkey will spend the fantastic amount of 150 billion dollars on military equipment, as follows.

- Land Forces Command – 60 billion dollars for 750 helicopters, 180 rocket and missile systems, 150 anti-tank rockets, 12 remote control air vehicles, 3,627 main communication tanks, 1951 guns and howitzers, and 48,564 wheeled vehicles.

- Naval Forces Command – 25 billion for 14 frigates, 16 patrol ships, 15 guided assault boats, 9 submarines, 4 anti-mine ships, 4 minesweepers, 35 landing vehicles, 1 communications-backed ship, 25 auxiliary-class ships and vehicles, 9 sea patrol aircraft, and 38 helicopters.
- Air Forces Command – 65 billion dollar for 640 fighter jets, 79 operations airplanes, 160 training aircraft, 68 transportation airplanes, 25 helicopters, 442 air defense weapon systems.<sup>19</sup>

Among its neighbors, Turkey ranks third after Israel and Russia, in allocation of funds for defense and is the sixth largest importer of arms in the world. Twenty-one percent of the country's military needs are met by domestic sources; foreign firms supply the rest. As of 1994 Turkey has the fourth largest security budget among NATO members in relation to its GDP, following Greece, the UK and the United States.<sup>20</sup>

### Turkey and Israel

Another component in Turkey's response to the regional threats has been the development of economic and military ties with Israel. Bilateral Turkish–Israeli relations have got their own *raison d'être*. Still, common adversaries such as Iran, Iraq, and Syria have drawn the two together, as have Islamic extremism and terror. At the same time, Israel provides a kind of alternative to the unfriendly EU. It also promotes Turkey's interests among the EU members, but more so in the United States. Interestingly, EU coldness is also behind Turkey's new closeness to Russia, to the tune of 14 billion dollar in investments and another 10 billion in trade (see Chapter 5).<sup>21</sup>

Enhanced by a multiplicity of motives, the association developed into a many tiered relationship. On the economic front, trade between Israel and Turkey flourishes. At 1 billion dollars a year, this trade is the largest volume of civil goods trade between any two Middle Eastern countries, a figure which is destined to double by the early 2000s.<sup>22</sup> In military terms, the upgrading of the Turkish F-4 Phantoms in Israel, the joint mid-air refueling exercises of the Turkish and Israeli air forces, and naval exercises in the Mediterranean are only the tip of the iceberg in the aforementioned alliance. The two parties share military intelligence and Turkey provides landing and training facilities for the Israeli air force. The two also conduct regular bilateral visits and discussions on military and political issues, under the supervision of high-ranking steering committees. In this extensive interactivity, the United States has a place of honor: tripartite understandings between Washington, Ankara and Jerusalem point to close cooperation between the three in the Muslim republics of Central Asia (see Chapter 7).<sup>23</sup>

## Turkey and the Arab states

The First World War, the end of the Ottoman Empire, and the rise of Kemalism, with its singular brand of Turkish nationalism, had a decisive effect on Turkey's relations with the Arab world. Turkey turned its back on the Arab world and set its sights on the West. Kemalism promoted secularity, in emulation of European values, and the ideas of democracy, freedom and human rights – with varying degrees of success. Among the thirty-member strong Islamic Conference, Turkey is the only professed secular and democratic country. However, in time, Turkey has learnt that its secularity, its democracy, its identification with the West and its ideological distance from the Islamic states are of no avail in moments of need. The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 is a good example. It appeared to Ankara that the United States was ignoring Turkey's security: in an apparent quid pro quo deal with Moscow, Washington agreed to remove its Jupiter missiles from its bases on Turkish territory. In return, Moscow had to remove its offensive weapons from Cuba. But it was now Turkey, devoid of American missile protection, which would be exposed to the full brunt of Moscow's fury.

When the Cyprus crisis erupted in 1964 and Turkey found itself stripped of United States support – gross ingratitude in the eyes of Turkey, whose identification with the West at times of crisis was total – Ankara hoped that rapprochement with the Arabs would pay off. The Arabs, instead, rushed en masse to support Greece, going so far as to supply the Greek Cypriots with arms for their campaign against the Turkish Cypriot minority. Turkey depicted this as a the second Arab betrayal – the first was Arab aid to Britain against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War – where Muslims, once again, stabbed it in the back, working closely with Christian infidels to slaughter fellow Muslims.<sup>24</sup>

The 1970s saw another discreet attempt on Turkey's part to draw closer to the Arab world, notably after the 1973 energy crisis. The country, practically, lacks its own oil resources. It produces only about 65,000 barrels of oil per day but needs 500,000. In 1996, for instance, Turkey's total oil reserves were estimated at around 260 million barrels, which would last seventeen months. In the years 1997 and 1998 Turkey imported 23,357,000 and 24,629,000 tons of crude oil, respectively. (Although it imported more oil in 1998, Turkey paid less because price per barrel was 11.40 dollars whereas in 1997 it was 18.50.) Still, in spite of the heavy imports of crude, domestic production of energy in Turkey does not meet with the level of consumption. In 2000 Turkey's total energy production needs were 91 million tons of oil, and the demand for energy is expected to increase almost fourfold by the year 2020 to 314 million tons of oil per annum. Turkey's natural gas consumption has been growing at 10 percent a year, and is expected to rise from 19 billion cubic meters in 2000 to 54 billion in 2010, and to 82 billion in 2020. Russia, Algeria, Turkmenistan, and Iran are, or will be, Turkey's main gas suppliers. The country's interest in the Caspian Sea energy sources is therefore obvious and is discussed in details below.<sup>25</sup>

But the turnabout towards the Arab world was a limited one: the Arabs may possess oil, but the West possesses modern industrial technology and consumer goods. Turkey's commercial links with the Arab states – though contributing to Turkish prosperity in the 1980s – went into a progressive decline, while trade with the United States and the European countries increased again. Prior to the 1970s oil crisis, Turkey's trade with the Arab states came to a mere 5 percent of its overall trade. From the 1973 October war up to 1981, that figure increased to 34 percent, mostly Turkish imports of Arab oil, more specifically Saudi, Libyan and Iraqi oil. (In 1981 United Arab Emirates [UAE] oil took Iraq's place.) Nineteen seventy-four was a particular crisis year, though not the worst of it: oil prices increased fivefold but Turkey also experienced political isolation owing to its intervention in Cyprus. In 1980, for example, Turkey's outlay on crude oil imports exceeded the country's total export earnings by 30 percent! This imbalance exacerbated Turkey's indebtedness and raised its inflation rate to extraordinary levels.

The situation changed again as from the mid-1980s. The eruption of the Iran–Iraq War and the ensuing fall of oil prices, resulted in a diminishing of Arab purchasing power. The waning of the cold war brought about the opening of market opportunities for Turkish goods in Eastern Europe and Asia. The eruption of the *Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan* (PKK) uprising in 1984 was attributed by Turkey to the support of Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Also, Ankara did not like the connection that Yasser Arafat found between the Iraqi eviction from Kuwait in 1991 and the need for similar moves in relation to Israel and the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and Turkey and the northern part of Cyprus. All this combined to reduce Turkey's trade with Middle Eastern Arab countries. It declined to mere 16 percent of the country's total foreign trade and later stabilized at less than 18 percent. Conversely, the trade has changed in character, with a growing component of Turkish exports and a reduction of Turkey's Middle Eastern imports. At the same time, the EU share of overall Turkish exports increased, reaching 45 percent in the late 1980s.<sup>26</sup>

Turkey's efforts at a rapprochement with the Arab states never really succeeded. Both distant and recent history combined to render these relations resentful and hostile. Memories of the struggle of incipient Arab nationalism against the decaying Ottoman Empire linger. The Turkish Republic's support for the Western powers in the inter-bloc standoff was often prejudicial to Arab nationalism and its campaign for independence. Suffice it to mention that Turkey supported Britain against Egypt, France against the Algerians, and has maintained close relations with Israel.

Modern Turkish nationalism is relatively youthful, dating to the turn of the nineteenth century. Only with the loss of the non-Turkish portions of the Ottoman Empire did the Turks fully formulate their national awareness. It, too, is under challenge, as evidenced by the Kurdish rebellion. Turkish nationalism dissociated itself from the Arab Islamic world, and even from the ethnic Turks of Central Asia. Whenever Turkey became the butt of pan-Arab or pan-Islamic



hostility and pressure from Egypt's Nasser or Iraq's Saddam (Hussein) or from Iran's Khomeini and their successors, it chose not the Muslim-regional option, but the preservation of its unique pro-Western, secular, democratic and non-Arab character. The complications resulting from Turkey's proximity not only to the crises ridden Middle East and Central Asia, but also to the Balkans only serve to reinforce Turkey's belief in strong relations with the West and its various organizations, NATO and the EU in particular.

### **The Gulf crisis erupts**

Iraq's aspirations to regional hegemony became obvious when it demobilized only a small part of its enormous army, following its apparent victory over Iran.<sup>27</sup> The war with Iran had granted Iraq worldwide renown as the barrier to the Iranian revolution, that was depicted in vividly barbaric colors. When the war ended, Iraq was perceived as victor, having forced Tehran to accept a cease-fire. As president of a regional power with undisguised aspirations to hegemony, Saddam's words and deeds had to be taken seriously. He called for the reinforcement of Arab nationalism and an Arab takeover of the Gulf by removal of the US forces, stationed there in the course of the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq War. He made a verbal onslaught upon the United States – a paper tiger that had withdrawn from Vietnam, and pulled out of Lebanon when a few marines were killed there. In April 1990 Saddam threatened to burn half of Israel; all army commanders of the Iraqi military were taken on a tour to inspect the Jordanian–Israeli border; and Iraqi jet fighters camouflaged in Jordanian colors photographed the Israeli nuclear reactor in Dimona. The execution, despite international appeals for clemency, of the British journalist Farzad Bazoft, found guilty on what were clearly trumped up charges of spying, was widely seen as evidence that Saddam was ready to take on the West. He went on to offer protection to the entire Arab world, a role he claimed to have discharged already when his country took on Iran, calling for a holy war – a jihad – against all Crusader heretics and their lackeys.<sup>28</sup>

Iraq's economy had suffered grievously in the war with Iran: damages inflicted on the country were estimated at 30 billion dollars. With a national income of 14 billion dollars at the immediate post-war period, Iraq had to repay foreign creditors 80 billion dollars, at an annual rate of 5 billion dollars. The Iraqi army, with its modern weapons, long-range missiles and non-conventional weaponry – chemical and, possibly, biological and nuclear – seemed an obvious threat to stability in the Gulf region and, in time, to the entire Middle East. Like Turkey, Iraq could no longer resort to the traditional tactic of playing on East–West rivalries for its own benefit. Having lost Soviet support, Baghdad began to entertain growing fears of the United States. As sole superpower, along with its Middle Eastern allies (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel and Turkey), the United States could step in and prevent Iraq from achieving its aspirations to regional hegemony. The economic resources required for that hegemony and for

its own reconstruction were to be found in Kuwait and in Kuwaiti banks.<sup>29</sup> (Iraqi troops who invaded Kuwait City on August 1990 found the local banks to be a disappointment: traditionally, in the summer the wealthy Kuwaitis take themselves and much of their money on shopping tours to Western countries.) Yet, Iraq blamed the Kuwaitis and the Saudis for conniving to ruin the Iraqi economy by reducing oil prices and by insisting on quick repayment of Iraqi debts.

Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in the summer of 1990 struck at a basic tenet of Turkey's Middle East policy: support for the present division of the states in the region. Ankara regards any unification as a threat of overbearing Arab nationalism, foreshadowing an expansionist policy by the unified state. The same Turkish objection was felt towards the merging of Syria and Egypt, 1958–61, that formed the United Arab Republic and was to be the first step towards the union of all Arab states. A super-Iraq, enjoying the economic and geo-political assets acquired through the conquest of Kuwait would be intolerable to Turkey. By pooling together Iraq's and Kuwait's oil resources, Saddam would gain control of one-fifth of the world's oil. Add to that Saudi Arabia's and Iraq would monopolize over 47.5 percent of the world's energy resources.

But Iraq's military muscle was the immediate threat. At the end of the 1980s Iraq had a mighty million-man army in 66 combat-seasoned divisions. They were experienced in gas warfare, equipped with surface-to-surface missiles, 10,000 anti-aircraft guns, 750 combat bombers, 160 shift-wing airplanes, 6,000 tanks and 64,000 shells with chemical warheads.<sup>30</sup> Baghdad's effective potential control of the Arabian peninsula, perhaps later including parts of Greater Syria, i.e. Jordan, with its human and strategic assets, would certainly menace Turkey's integrity. It would surely weaken it in its water and territorial disputes with Iraq and Syria. Horrified, Ankara watched the equilibrium of the entire Middle East being upset by a super-Iraq: Israel was perceived as capable of nothing beyond surgical strikes; Syria was tied down in Lebanon and its border with Israel; Iran was licking its wounds after eight years of war with Iraq.<sup>31</sup>

Circumstances both justified Turkish anxiety and explained the unequivocal resolve President Ozal displayed throughout the Gulf crisis, calling for Saddam's overthrow, even for his personal elimination, and insisting on an exclusively military resolution of the crisis. It could well be, as Mahmut Bali Aykan quotes, that Ozal regarded the failure of the Americans to act to remove Saddam from power, as "the biggest trick the Western world played on Turkey." Even after the 1991 Gulf War, Ozal called for Saddam's removal, saying it would be hard to imagine a leader surviving after dragging his people through nine years of war in the course of twelve years in power. Ozal hoped that the cease-fire terms imposed on Iraq at the end of the Gulf war – comparing it to the "drinking of the cup of humiliation" – would lead to Saddam's overthrow.<sup>32</sup>

With the invasion of Kuwait (August 1990), Saddam's rhetoric became increasingly histrionic. He depicted the conquest of Kuwait as an Islamic jihad on behalf of the poor and the downtrodden, and against the corrupt and the monarchs of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for inviting the Crusaders to defile the

sacred Arab soil. Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, warned public opinion in the coalition member countries that their governments had sent troops to the Gulf to fight for the cause of the Saudi and Kuwaiti degenerate monarchs who were incapable of distinguishing their daughters from their wives. But Saddam went a step further: he urged that Kuwaiti oil reserves and their proceeds be placed at the disposal of all the Muslim and Arab peoples. It is easy to see why. On the eve of the Gulf War Kuwaiti production amounted to 59 million ton of crude, Iraq's to 100 million, and both countries hold 20 percent of the world's oil reserves. By comparison, Saudi Arabia's production at that time was 322 million tons, 25.2 percent of the world's reserves.<sup>33</sup>

At the immediate period before the crisis Saddam asked Kuwait for money. The Kuwaitis refused and, as above, demanded first to be reimbursed for monies they had loaned Iraq during its war with Iran. Declaring Kuwait "an impertinent state, a state of pygmies" for her reply, Baghdad offered a new division of Muslim wealth that should be done under the rule of Iraq and its President, a modern reincarnation of the Sword of Islam, Salah al-Din (1139–93). Having defeated the Crusaders at the battle of Hittin (1187), Salah al-Din went on to conquer and liberate Jerusalem from Crusader rule. The parallel between the West – the Americans, the Christians, and their "lackeys" like the Israelis or even Muslims like the Saudis or the Turks – and the Crusaders is self-evident. Both are foreign infidels or their servants, who invaded Arab lands and are therefore bound to suffer the same fate as the Crusaders.

Iraq's Islamic propaganda ("We invaded Kuwait for the benefit of the entire Muslim world") belittled the significance of borders between different Muslim peoples. There are no borders between Muslims; political borders that do exist were created by imperialists for their own ends. There is nothing sacred about the borders of Kuwait, and Kuwait's oil belongs to all Muslims. Besides, annexing Kuwait is re-installing justice, an internal Iraqi business, strictly not to be interfered by outsiders: Kuwait is a renegade province that should be reunited with its mother country. Indeed, not long ago, following the announcement of Kuwaiti independence in June 1961, Baghdad claimed Kuwait as an integral part of Iraq. Threatened with Iraqi invasion, it were British troops, and later an Arab League force, that deterred Iraqi action.<sup>34</sup>

What was Turkey to make of Saddam's nationalistic and Muslim fervor, his dismissal of borders and repudiation of the significance of ownership of natural resources like oil? It was just one step before a Muslim Arab demand, spear-headed by Iraq and Syria, for ownership of Turkey's water. Saddam's similar reference to Turkey and Kuwait is indeed a case in point. In a speech in July 1997, he distinguished between the government of Turkey and its people, the same as he used to describe the Kuwaitis and their monarchs. He mentioned the difference between being injured by Muslims and by non-Muslims ("Infidels and their lackeys"). Iraq, Saddam claimed, was greatly injured during the Gulf War – "The Thirty State Aggression" – by Muslim countries like Turkey. But Ankara should learn the lesson:

Turkish officials must understand that the official reaction of a government is not an exact replica of the reaction of its Muslim or Arab people. Indeed, a Muslim state that pursues unpredicted and unjust policies against another Muslim country should expect a harsh and violent reaction by its own Arab or Muslim population. I hope that Turkey's officials will rise above their stubborn conceit and refrain from doing evil. Instead, they must look to their own people and grasp the need to merge Turkish with Arab and Islamic interests.<sup>35</sup>

Saddam's brand of Arab nationalism was far from easing differences. In January 1990, just a few months before the invasion of Kuwait, when Turkey temporarily blocked the flow of the Euphrates for thirty days to fill up the reservoir north of the Ataturk Dam, Iraq "suddenly" unveiled its arsenal of ballistic and non-conventional weaponry. Stories of Iraq's "super cannon," capable of firing its shells hundreds of kilometers, along with recollections of Iraqi gas attacks on the Kurds, added to the tension then building between Turkey and Iraq.

A further issue that should have caused concern in Ankara was Iraq's nuclear potential. But the Turks, like the rest of the world, including all intelligence agencies, were only aware in the most general terms of the fact that Iraq possessed sufficient enriched uranium for the production of a nuclear bomb. In summer 1990, on the eve of the Gulf War, Iraq was two-thirds of the way there, if not closer. Rolfe Ekeus, the United Nations representative in UNSCOM – the Security Council Observation Mission in Iraq, the body supervising the country's disarmament in non-conventional weaponry – noted that on the eve of the Gulf War that Iraq was only three months short of conducting its first nuclear test.<sup>36</sup>

Turkey's unease was further inflamed when its General Staff conducted its war games in early 1990. It appeared that the Iraqi army's modern weaponry and combat experience were likely to take a heavy toll of the Turkish army before the latter could stabilize its line of defense in the east of the country.<sup>37</sup> However, this worrying prospect was not solely due to Iraq's military superiority. The Turkish army had not fared well since the end of the cold war. Owing to American and European restrictions, acquisition of new weaponry had ground to a complete halt and, lacking funds for spare parts, military equipment was rendered idle. The cannibalization of weapon systems and vehicles was adopted as a common solution. Sophisticated weapons like the "Patriot" anti-missile-missiles delivered to other NATO members did not reach the Turkish army. The modern weapons that poured into Turkey during and after the Gulf War showed the Turks just how antiquated their weapons systems actually were. Some dated to Korean War-era American military surplus, including aging M47 and M48 Patton tanks and F4 Phantom jets. Earlier, with the eruption of the Iraq-Kuwait crisis and facing an uncertain military balance with Iraq, Turkey's senior officers had queried President Ozal's aggressive policy towards Iraq. They doubted that he had the necessary military muscle to back it.

A summation of all the above thus shows that the international intervention in the Gulf crisis and in the subsequent war was designed, first, to free Kuwait and foil an Iraqi takeover of Saudi oil fields. It also was aimed, most probably by

Washington, at preventing Iraq from attacking Turkey. As noted above, Baghdad and Turkey seemed to be on a collision course: a super-Iraq could not have tolerated its total dependence upon Turkey for its water, for the export of its oil, and for the integrity of its northern territories.

It would be tempting to generalize that, as shown by the Gulf War and past experience (the 1947 Truman Doctrine and the 1958 dispatch of the Marines to Lebanon), massive and forceful US intervention in the Middle East had first to be preceded by a threat to Turkey. Alas, such a conclusion would be over-hasty as long as the relevant documents are unavailable. But the Gulf crisis focused US attention on Turkey, seemingly to an exceptional degree judging by Secretary of States James Baker's numerous telephone conversations with Turgut Ozal and his frequent visits to Ankara. These unique relations probably did not terminate at the Secretary of State's level, but continued at the "President to President" level through the summer of 1991. Some go so far as to claim that the Ankara's permission to allow the deployment in Turkey of a Western multinational force to monitor Iraq and the "Safe Haven," was nothing but "a kind of 'present or souvenir,'" granted by President Ozal to President Bush.<sup>38</sup>

### Turkey's response

Turgut Ozal, an electrical engineer by profession, became Prime Minister of Turkey in 1983, and President in 1989 until his death in 1993. He is given credit for his country's prosperity during the 1980s. He is said to have held the "Jidda-Dallas" theory: Turks should conduct their religious life like the Muslims of Jidda, and enjoy the lifestyle displayed in the *Dallas* television series. Ozal appears to have been the first Turkish politician to grasp the importance of television, making great use of it to enhance his influence. It was particularly noticeable during the Gulf crisis when Ozal resorted to frequent television appearances in an effort to show that Turkey had a unique opportunity to improve its relations with the West, and remove the Iraqi threat against it. His policy throughout the crisis rested upon the following elements:

- 1 Turkish troop concentrations near the Iraqi border;
- 2 permission to the coalition forces to use Turkish territory for its operations;
- 3 strict observance of the international sanctions imposed on Iraq;
- 4 extracting economic and political concessions from the West and Japan, in return for Turkey's aid during the crisis;
- 5 weakening Iraq without a single Turkish soldier actually taking part in the fighting or crossing into Iraq.

The annals of this century show few examples of a country that has succeeded, in the course of over seventy years, in achieving its regional objectives without its armed forces becoming embroiled in combat. Having contrived to do so ever since the 1920s – the 1974 Cyprus crisis, when partition was forced on the island

by the Turkish army, was the exception that proves the rule – Turkey did not relinquish that policy in the Gulf War.

Turgut Ozal, after years in office as Prime Minister and President was dubbed with numerous nicknames, not all flattering: “omnipotent ruler,” “Ottoman Sultan,” and “l’etat c’est moi.” He was, perhaps, no different from what Metin Heper describes as the line of Ottoman and Turkish political leaders who enjoyed excessive and inordinate power.<sup>39</sup> Ozal was a Turkish statesman, without a president to overshadow him or confine his megalomania. Yet, Ozal was the greatest innovator and reformer in Turkey since the time of Ataturk, particularly with regard to economic and internal matters. He destroyed the accepted notion that the Turkish President was only a figurehead and that real power was lodged with the Prime Minister. He also changed the tradition which, since 1960, had insisted that the President be a retired General. It seems that after Ozal, the President of the Turkish Republic – be it Suleiman Demirel or Ahmet Sezer – is no longer a weak political figure, but always a force to reckon with.

Furthermore, Ozal did more for Turkey outside its borders than any previous leader, having gone abroad more than seventy times during his tenure. He was the initiator of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region (BSECR or BSEC), the foundations of which were laid in June 1992 in Istanbul, during Ozal’s presidency, but were formally established only in June 1998, long after his death. Turkey, at that time feeling snubbed in Europe despite her contribution to the victory over Iraq, was keen to build a regional body with high potential for economic and trade cooperation. The littoral Black Sea countries and adjacent states joined the BSECR and established a body of states comprising more than 325 million people. Eleven countries (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldavia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and the Ukraine), consider the BSECR as aiming at promoting cooperation among the member countries in matters pertaining to transportation, communications, energy, mining, tourism industry, and the environment. The BSECR, however, has not yet created the economic community its founder wished for. A secretariat has been established in Istanbul and a bank was set up in Thessaloniki – the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank – yet, local, regional and global economic and political hardships still hamper the development of the BSECR. Conflicts among its members – Greece versus Turkey; Azerbaijan and Turkey versus Armenia – proved to be detrimental for cooperation. Also, antecedence is given to mutual rather than to regional contacts, and other priorities that overshadow the BSECR (like that of Turkey and of most of the organization’s western countries whose main focus is the EU), causing the organization to be of secondary importance to its members.<sup>40</sup>

Those who disagreed with Ozal’s policies in the Gulf crisis were offered a single option: they could resign. That, indeed, was the fate of Turkey’s Commander-in-Chief, Minister of Defense, and Foreign Minister, Necip Torumtay, Safa Giray, and Ali Bozer, respectively. Ozal’s policies during the crisis were prudent, but his rhetoric was belligerent – some called it “zoological” – and directed

at “the serpent of Baghdad” whose head the Turkish President proposed to crush. (He also said “that the only way to survive with a hawk like Saddam is to be yourself a hawk.”) Without preempting UN Security Council decisions relating to Iraq, Ozal complied with them to the letter throughout the Gulf crisis. Dismissing diplomacy or economic sanctions as means of inducing Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, Ozal fervently advocated the military option. He gave the coalition forces all possible military aid, short of engaging Turkish troops in the fighting.<sup>41</sup>

The fiercest opposition to Ozal’s policies came from within his own camp. The Generals in his entourage feared that his violently anti-Saddam rhetoric would ultimately set off a war with Iraq. They were concerned lest the Turkish army’s antiquated armaments would not stand up to the Iraqis’ combat experience and modern weaponry. Ozal’s Foreign Ministry complained that when the crisis came to an end, coalition forces would vacate the region, leaving Turkey alone to confront Iraq. Opposition also came from conservative circles within his Motherland Party who sought to restrict his power. In quarters more remote from the President, religious circles claimed that, as an Islamic state, Turkey should support Saddam against the Crusade of the Christian West. In their opinion, Ozal failed to show consideration for Iraq’s Muslim character, or convey admiration for the words “Allah is Great!” which appear on the Iraqi flag. Indeed, Saddam Hussein did gain some sympathies among sections of the Turkish people, in contrast to the hostility of the country’s decision-makers. In Turkey, as in other Arab and Muslim countries that had joined the anti-Iraq coalition, the populace, in marked contrast to the ruling elite, was to a degree sympathetic towards Saddam.

Ozal could rely on his army, despite the conflicting stands that the Generals and he had taken vis-à-vis Iraq. To be precise, the President could be sure that the Turkish military would refrain from intervening by either removing him from office or seizing power. The year of 1990 marked the end of the pattern of the “ten-year cycle” of 1960, 1971 and 1980, when the Turkish army intervened in domestic politics, changing the composition of the government, taking over the reins of power and dispersing parliament. It was plain to everyone, including the Turkish army, that further intervention on its part would prompt fierce criticism from Europe. Turkey’s wish to demonstrate the existence of a stable, Western-style democracy in Turkey would suffer an intolerable setback from any further military intervention in domestic politics. Such a step would have offered deadly ammunition to those who did not want Turkey in the EU. But Turkey’s unrelenting support of the anti-Iraq coalition was in great part given with an eye to improving Turkey’s relations with the EU.

There is yet one other matter to which Ozal gave his attention. In January 1991, only days before the outbreak of the Gulf War, Turkey proclaimed a seemingly dramatic switch in policy towards its Kurdish citizens. For the first time, Kurds were permitted to use their language, names, and literature, and pursue their heritage and history. The Kurdish issue was opened up for a discussion

never held before, with first-ever proposals for a response not exclusively forceful and military. Views differed as to the motives behind Ozal's step. On the eve of the Gulf War, with Turkey manifestly adhering to the anti-Iraq coalition, Ozal may have thought his country's pro-Western image would be enhanced by a saner and more moderate domestic policy. Alas, Ankara's moderation appears to have been directed at the Iraqi Kurds rather than their Turkish brethren. Turkey's post-Gulf War Kurdish policies apparently prove this: it shows tolerance towards the Kurds of Iraq, while persisting in its campaign against its own Kurds. Ozal was hoping that the Iraqi Kurds would subsequently help him to foster his links with other elements in Iraq, in the event of Iraq's disintegration in the wake of hostilities. (Iran, it should be recalled, then acted similarly in relation to the Shi'ites of southern Iraq.) History seemed to repeat itself because in December 2001 Turkey launched a similar policy: anticipating America's "War Against Terror" to be waged also against Iraq, and a consequent breakdown of the regime in Baghdad, Ankara amassed its forces in northern Iraq. The Turkish infantry and the 160 or so tanks should help Turkish interests in case a new map has to be drawn for Iraq.<sup>42</sup>

### Regional reaction

Turkish declarations and deeds left no room for doubt as to Ankara's total commitment to the West's anti-Baghdad coalition. It was a clear signal: Turkey, it seemed, had reverted to the 1950s, when Ankara, under the premiership of Adnan Menderes, was the most pro-Western capital in the Middle East. There were times in-between when this was not the case. In 1980, for example, during one of the coolest periods in Turkish-American relations, Turkey turned down an American request to join in sanctions against Iran, following the American hostage crisis in Tehran.<sup>43</sup> Menderes and Turkey's total identification with the West drew condemnation, often vicious, from the Arab Middle East, whose venom was reflected in caricatures of Turkey as a small dog sniffing at the rear quarters of a larger hound (the United States, the UK), or a lapdog being dragged by its Western master.<sup>44</sup>

In 1990, however, it was Yasser Arafat who, after supporting Saddam Hussein fervently throughout the Gulf crisis and war, complained bitterly of the international community's hypocrisy in relation to Iraq. The world was up in arms about Iraq's actions in Kuwait in 1990, but that selfsame world had come to terms with Turkey's aggression in Cyprus ever since 1974. Greece reveled in the comparison but in Turkey it further inflamed declarations against Iraq. The concept of "linkage" between the solution of the Kuwait crisis and the resolution of conflicts elsewhere, as in Cyprus or in the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, were vehemently rejected in Turkey; but not only there. On 15 March 1991, at a press conference in Martinique, President George Bush backed Turkey unequivocally. The Cyprus conflict was not among Middle East problems for



whose solution Washington would extend aid. Cyprus was not part of the Middle East, its affairs should be entrusted to the United Nations, argued Bush, thereby effectively putting paid to any solution of the conflict in the foreseeable future. And Greece, it should be recalled, had to settle for moral support from the European Parliament in the form of an 18 April 1991 resolution, urging that the resolve applied in the Gulf War apply equally in Cyprus.<sup>45</sup>

Even Kuwait was not “thrilled” by Turkish support. In March 1991, in a lavish one-page publication in the *Washington Post*, the Kuwaiti government thanked all the governments and states that had aided in liberating its country. The list, however, omitted Turkey. Turkey’s response was not long delayed: a few days later, Turkish state television screened the movie *Lawrence of Arabia*, as a reminder of Arab perfidy and ingratitude during the First World War.

### **Aftermath of the war: economic losses**

Turkey’s war losses were heavy, somewhere between the conservative estimate of 9 billion dollars and a long-range estimate of over 35 billion dollars. The losses stemmed from the decline in tourist revenues, the absence of Iraqi oil royalties from the line which pipes oil from Kerkuk to Yumurtalik (an annual loss of 400 million dollars), the loss of markets and the cessation of services and construction in Iraq and Kuwait. A fleet of more than 40,000 trucks fell idle. Before the imposition of the UN Security Council’s sanctions these vehicles had operated between Turkey and Iraq, serving as the “oxygen in the blood” of the trade between the two countries. Most of the vehicles belonged to people in southeast Turkey, which is populated largely by Kurds. Their idleness further exacerbated the economic crisis in that area. Turkey was not even permitted to empty the contents of the oil lines running through its territory. (When the Gulf War erupted, 7.2 million barrels of oil remained in the Kerkuk–Yumurtalik pipeline.) When the war started, the UN Security Council affirmed that use of the oil lodged in the pipeline would prejudice the export embargo imposed on Iraq. At the same time Turkey found itself saddled with somewhere between 500,000 and 700,000 Kurdish refugees from Iraq, concentrated at sixteen points on either side of the Iraq–Turkish border.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, unlike Egypt, for example, whose external debts were mainly to Western governments, and could therefore be written-off in return for its adherence to the anti-Iraq coalition, most of Turkey’s external debts (some 43 billion dollars), were due to private banking creditors, making it harder for Ankara to get these rescheduled.

Inflation in Turkey rose to 71.1 percent in 1991, compared with 60.3 percent in the year preceding the Gulf War. Interest went sky-high that year, reaching 105 percent on an annual basis. The gross national product (GNP) decreased, as did the growth of agricultural and industrial production, the latter from 9.1 percent in 1990 to a mere 3.2 percent in 1991. The service sector expanded by a mere 1.1 percent in 1991, compared with 9.4 percent in 1990. Increase in overall GDP,

which had rocketed by 9.2 percent in 1990, declined to 1.5 percent the following year. An indication of the economic slowdown can be found in the following figures: accounts in Turkish banks in 1991 were in credit to a total 272 million dollars. In 1990, the selfsame accounts were in more active use, showing overdrafts to a total of 2.6 billion dollars.<sup>47</sup>

Turkey, understandably, has a direct interest in the cancellation of the economic sanctions against Iraq or, at least, in their reduction. Not waiting for a move from the Security Council, Ankara signed contracts with Iraq for the importation of crude oil in lieu of Iraqi debts. This stimulated the transportation sector in the country's southeast and created new jobs.<sup>48</sup> Simultaneously, Turkey expended much diplomatic activity in promoting UN Resolution 986 which calls for "Oil for Food" and allows Iraq, since December 1996, to export 2.1 million barrels a day (equal to 2 billion dollars every six months), in return for the import of food and medicines. The UN decided to ensure that the proceeds would not be spent on weaponry and earmarked 53 percent of it for Baghdad to buy food and medicines. Thirteen percent were to serve the UN agencies active in the Iraqi Kurdish areas. Thirty percent were to be paid to Kuwait and, proportionally, to other countries that suffered from the Iraqi aggression. The rest was to cover the expenses of the UN observers that run the Oil for Food project.

In 1998 the amount the UN allowed Baghdad to earn by exporting its oil, was raised to 5.25 billion dollars per 6 months. But falling oil prices (8–9 dollars per barrel in early 1999), plus production limits – Iraq's oil fields cannot pump nearly that much and do not exceed 2.1 million barrels a day – caused proceeds to fall much below the 5.25 billion amount. (The pre-1991 Gulf War level stood on 3.5 million barrels a day.) Consequently, the UN has allowed Baghdad to spend 300 million dollar for the purchasing of spare parts and to upgrade capacity. However, the process is slow and behind schedule, and would take years to complete. Nevertheless, some progress has been made and Iraqi oil production, plus the quantity sold to Jordan under special arrangements, has risen to 2.6 million barrels a day, allowing Iraq to earn 18 billion dollars in 2000.<sup>49</sup>

Resolution 986 has reduced the economic pressures on Turkey since both the oil and the foods pass in and out of Turkey. The "Oil for Food" agreement is estimated to bring Turkey about 500 million dollar a year. (For comparison, between 1985 and 1990, Turkish exports to Iraq were 780 million dollar a year. The entire annual volume of trade between the two countries during those years – including Turkey's oil imports – reached 4 billion dollars.)<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, Ankara agreed to extend the mandate of "Operation Northern Watch" if the United States consented to the partial revival of Iraqi–Turkish trade. Washington agreed and allowed the resumption of trade between the two countries, within the strict confines of the "Oil for Food" agreement.

"Operation Northern Watch," it should be recalled, forbids Iraqi flights over northern Iraq past the thirty-sixth latitude. This, in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions accepted after the Gulf War, was to provide on one-tenth of the Iraqi territory (about 19,000 square miles or 49,000 square

kilometers) a “Safe Haven,” or “Safe Zone,” for the Kurds. More than forty-five American and British airplanes and some 1400 soldiers take part in these activities (known up to 1997 as “Operation Provide Comfort” and “Poised Hammer”), whose headquarters are located at the air base in Incirlik in southern Turkey, with ground and support elements in Silopi and Batman. There are two no-flight zones in Iraq: above the thirty-sixth parallel which covers most of the Kurdish “Safe Haven” imposed in April 1991, and the southern no-flight zone imposed in August 1992 to protect Shi’ite Muslims in Iraq. The southern zone now covers the southern third of Iraq, reaching the thirty-third parallel, and extends to the outskirts of Baghdad. Turkey cooperates with this monitoring – among other things it further confirms its deterrence vis-à-vis Iraq – but insists that it will be coordinated with Iraq. Ankara is concerned lest the international force might extend help, even unintentionally, to PKK people also active in northern Iraq. For instance, there have been reports that a transport aircraft belonging to the force and operating from Incirlik dropped aid supplies in various places in the “Safe Haven” where Kurdish rebels were known to be.<sup>51</sup>

### **The war’s aftermath: Turkey’s gains**

There are various ways of measuring Turkey’s Gulf War gains. One, no doubt, is the fact that the fighting was left to others. Turkey’s greatest success is that for more than seventy years there has not been a war on Turkish territory. There are not many countries in the world that can match this record, especially not the countries of the Middle East. During the 500 years of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey never stopped fighting. Quincy Wright found that between 1450 and 1900 the Ottoman Empire spent an average of sixty-one years per century fighting.<sup>52</sup> In the Second World War Turkey was already pursuing a policy of “abstinence”: it refused to fight on any side, thereby avoiding both Nazi occupation and Soviet “liberation.” Leaving war to others and concentrating on bringing Turkey into the twentieth century has been Ankara’s international policy since the establishment of the republic in 1923. Accordingly, the neutrality exhibited by Turkey towards conflicts and wars in the Middle East – among other things, for the purpose of precluding any accusations of “neo-Ottomanism” – remained in force during the Gulf War. Not a single Turkish soldier crossed his country’s borders.

But no less important is that Turkey gained security. The Iraqi army was weakened, significant parts of it were annihilated and Iraq has been subjected to extensive intelligence surveillance. While the Iraqi army lay in ruins, the Turkish army, thanks to Western gratitude, remedied many of its deficiencies. It replenished its second-rate, inadequate arms arsenal, acquiring vast amounts of modern weapons, including 600 M60 tanks, 400 Leopard tanks, 700 armored troop carriers, and an assortment of helicopters, missiles and airplanes. The “Patriot” missiles stationed in Turkey in the course of the fighting were ultimately left in place. Turkey’s air force gained over forty US combat airplanes,

while its aircraft industry (TAI) has been licensed to construct forty-six F-16s and, moreover, to sell them, in this instance, to Egypt. Turkey is now in second place among all the countries receiving surplus American weaponry. As of the early 1990s it had received 1.53 billion dollars. (Greece is in first place with 1.8 billion dollars and Israel is third with 718 million dollars.) Turkey has since received billions of dollars in export contracts, oil deliveries, customs concessions, grants, canceled debts and access to markets, which have more than made up for its initial losses. Textile exports to the United States, for example, are up 50 percent, comprising 1 percent of US textile imports. In 1998 the trade volume between Turkey and the United States reached 6.289 billion dollar – 3.25 billion in 1990 – almost twice what it was just before the Gulf War.<sup>53</sup>

Turkey's political gains vis-à-vis Washington are also impressive, especially on issues pertaining to Turkish–Greek relations and Cyprus. From 1980 up to the Gulf War, the United States granted the two countries military and economic aid in a seven:ten ratio, Turkey, being larger, receiving the larger share. United States military aid to the two countries served to deter them from attacking one another over Cyprus and over matters relating to sovereignty and territorial waters in the Aegean Sea. However, with the growth of tensions in the Middle East and around Turkey, the bolstering of Turkish power was considered more pressing than the preservation of the Greco-Turkish balance of forces.<sup>54</sup> An opportunity for breaking out of the seven:ten straitjacket was offered by the Gulf crisis, the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the eruption of violence in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Balkans. Washington's policy position – in apparent discharge of a pledge to President Ozal given in return for Turkey's aid to the coalition forces during the Gulf campaign – put an end to the seven:ten ratio in US relations with Turkey and Greece. In 1996 the United States reverted for a while to the seven:ten ratio, but towards the end of the 1990s it was totally quashed (see Chapter 6).

*The Economist's* "Survey Turkey" concluded its June 1996 chapter on Turkey in the following words: "If you had to pick ten countries in the world you would least like to live next to, they would be bound to include some of Turkey's neighbors." "You don't know what is it like to have Saddam Hussein, Hafez Assad and the Iranians next door," complain the Turks. And just how stable, they ask, are the new countries to their east: Azerbaijan and Armenia? And what would happen if Russia became aggressively nationalist and tried to restore its hegemony in the region?<sup>55</sup> Similarly, a Turkish official has expressed himself recently: "I only wish God had built Turkey somewhere else." One can sympathize with this anxiety. The only thing missing in Turkey's list of woes is a border conflict with Chechnya – the two *do not* have a common border. Then it would have been easy to observe just how Turkey is inextricably drawn into every possible conflict in the area.

Seemingly, there is no external conflict or focus of internal instability in which Turkey has not been involved in one way or another: Iraq, Iran, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbejan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Cyprus, Greece, Bulgaria, Russia, Tajikistan,

Syria, Muslim extremism and a civil war with the PKK. In the same breath, however, one can praise Turkish policies which, despite all those undesirable neighbors, has wisely managed to keep out of trouble and minimize possible damages. Similarly, the 1990s have defused many of the conflicts and sores mentioned here, thus removing pressures on Turkey's strategic calculations and easing some of its strains – to mention but few: the end of the cold war, the weakening of Iraq, and the defeat of the PKK. Conversely, the shortening of the list of strife that Turkey has been embroiled with has worsened the situation of those who still remained in conflict with Turkey. The result, for Greece for instance, was a recalculation of its stand vis-à-vis Turkey, ending in opting for a dialogue with her (see Chapter 6).

Turkey's non-participation in the Gulf War – i.e. avoiding the dispatch of soldiers – was classical testimony to Ankara's spectacular caution. There is a firm basis for the assumption, therefore, that Turkey will not be tempted to respond to the call of the *Time* magazine writer (mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) to become the policeman or the regional superpower in the service of the West. There is nothing like the Gulf War to remind us that the gendarmes will not be Turks. Turkey, perhaps, will serve as a courier, an intermediary. President Suleiman Demirel, still in the capacity of Prime Minister when writing these words, made this clear: "We may be a bridge to Asia but we do not pretend to be the voice of Asia. On the contrary, for our closest neighbors we represent the voice of Europe."<sup>56</sup>

The Gulf War and the period following it produced some results that will make things easier for Turkey in the future. As mentioned above, the Iraqi army received an enormous blow and Iraq remains under close intelligence surveillance – the war was traumatic because it demonstrated how little relevant intelligence on Iraq was available. Furthermore, the Soviet Union, its traditional protégé being Baghdad, was dismembered. These elements improve Turkey's situation and leave it with the largest and strongest army in the Middle East – 800,000 soldiers.

Turkey's army demonstrated considerable restraint during the Gulf War and it was the army Generals who demanded restraint from President Ozal, a rather exceptional occurrence in army–state relations. When forced by resistance from the military and the Foreign Ministry, Ozal was unable to involve Turkey more actively in the war against Iraq by dispatching ships and troops.<sup>57</sup> However, the resignation of the Chief-of-Staff, General Necip Torumtay (Feroz Ahmad's description of him: "an unusual officer, who loved classical music and serious reading and was fluent in English"), because of differences with President Ozal, constituted a very positive development in army–state relations. Previously, it had been the government that gave in when differences with the army arose, unless, as happened twice, the army physically intervened and took over from the government. As Gareth Winrow put it, powerful civilian rulers can still overrule military commanders. Indeed, already as Prime Minister, Ozal demonstrated unusual determination against the army when, in 1987,

he insisted on the appointment of Torumtay and not the army's candidate, Necdet Oztorun. Significantly, this was dubbed in Turkey a "civilian coup."<sup>58</sup>

Still, the continuation of the war against the PKK and the danger of internal instability raised some anxieties lest the army would try to force its opinions on the government. There were even those who believed that the brass were not really interested in ending the Kurdish uprising because it provided them with an excuse for threatening to take, or taking, power.<sup>59</sup> It is impossible to exaggerate the extreme harm to Turkish democracy that such a takeover would have caused, not to mention the damage to Turkey's international position. Those who take pleasure in Turkey's trials and tribulations most certainly would have enjoyed occurrences like the army's intervention in politics. As is well known, such straightforward interventions on behalf of the military did not take place. There were instead conspicuous moves that eventually led to resignation of politicians, Prime Minister Erbakan, for instance (see Chapter 4).

Among the other harmful effects caused by the army-PKK war, was the slowdown in decreasing the size of the Turkish army. Because of the blow sustained by the Iraqi army and the fall of the Soviet Union, the Turkish army was supposed to have been reduced in numbers between 1991 and 1996 by more than half – from 1.1 million soldiers to between 350,000 and 500,000 – with less conscripts and more career soldiers. However, the Turkish military still numbers 720,000–800,000 and length of service is still eighteen months rather than the projected twelve months, though with shorter service for the reserve forces. In addition to the war with the PKK that lasted until 1999, the unsettled situation of Turkey's neighbors has also contributed to this slowdown.<sup>60</sup>

## Notes

- 1 George J. Church, *Time*, 19 October 1992.
- 2 Philip Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East*, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs and Pinter Publishers, 1991, pp. 26–27.
- 3 William Polk, *The United States and the Arab World*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1965, pp. 279–282.
- 4 Dankwart A. Rustow, *Turkey: America's Forgotten Ally*, New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 1987, pp. vii–x (Introduction by Bernard Lewis), p. 110.
- 5 Ian O. Lesser, "Beyond 'Bridge or Barrier': Turkey's Evolving Security with the West," in Alan Makovski and Sabri Sayari (eds), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC, Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy, 2000, p. 211. According to *Hurriyet* (Turkish), and *Daily News Bulletin* (Greek), 27 January 1997, some 70 percent of the drugs used in Western Europe originate in Turkey. Eighty percent of Asian countries' drugs that reach Europe were transported via Turkey.
- 6 Kemal Kirisci, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies," paper prepared for conference on "America's Allies in a Changing World," Bar-Ilan University, Israel, the BESA Center for Strategic Studies and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Tel Aviv, 9–10 November 1998.
- 7 The Sadabad Pact (1937) was a non-aggression pact between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, designed to give these countries security in face of growing international

- tension in Europe and in the Mediterranean region on the eve of the Second World War. The Baghdad Pact (1955) between Iraq and Turkey was an agreement for mutual cooperation which was expanded that year to include Iran, Pakistan and Great Britain. The United States was the major supporter of the pact but never joined it officially. It was the West's cornerstone in its Middle Eastern defense system, with emphasis on the northern axis (Turkey–Iran–Pakistan). Iraq was its link with the Arab countries. In general, the Baghdad Pact was portrayed in the Arab world as a Western imperialistic means to curb Arab nationalism.
- 8 *Cumhuriyet* (Turkish), 14 and 18 July 1993; Mahmut Bali Aykan, "Turkey's Policy in Northern Iraq, 1991–95," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4, October 1996, p. 362.
  - 9 Background notes, excerpts from Saddam's National Day Speech on Turkey and Iraq, 17 July 1997. MERIA Seminar, Background Material, Part 1, 24 October 1997.
  - 10 Alon Liel, *Turkey in the Middle East: Oil, Islam and Politics* (Hebrew), Tel Aviv, University of Tel Aviv and Dayan Center, 1994, pp. 45, 179; Barry Rubin, "The Gulf Crisis: Origins and Course of Events," in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Vol. 14, 1990, Boulder, CO, San Francisco, CA, and Oxford, Westview Press, 1992, p. 85.
  - 11 *The Economist*, "Survey Turkey," 8 June 1996.
  - 12 *Hurriyet*, 28 June 1990; *Gunash* (Turkish), 26 September 1990; *Mideast Mirror*, 8 October 1991. On the Middle East water shortage see: Amikam Nachmani, "Water Jitters in the Middle East," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 20, No. 1, January–March 1997, pp. 67–93.
  - 13 *Ha'aretz* (Hebrew), 12 April 1996; *Turkish Daily News* (hereafter *TDN*), 7 April 1997.
  - 14 *The Economist*, "Survey Turkey," 8 June 1996.
  - 15 Kemal Kirisci, "Turkey and the Kurdish 'Safe Haven' in Northern Iraq," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3, Spring 1996, p. 21; *Washington Times*, 11 March 1998.
  - 16 *Turkistan Newsletter*, TN, Vol. 98:2–35, No. 25 February 1998; Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East*, p. 62; Dani Rubinstein, *Ha'aretz*, 3 February 1991.
  - 17 Ismail Soysal, "Seventy Years of Turkish–Arab Relations and an Analysis of Turkish–Iraqi Relations (1920–1990)," *Studies on Turkish–Arab Relations: Special Issue on Turkey and the Gulf Crisis*, Istanbul, Foundation for the Study of Turkish–Arab Relations (TAIV), Annual 6, 1991, p. 70; Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East*, pp. 110–111.
  - 18 Bruce A. Kuniholm, "Turkey and the West," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 43–44; the author's correspondence with the Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Turkey, 22 December 1995; *TDN*, 21 March 2000.
  - 19 *TDN*, 7 April 1997.
  - 20 *Time*, 15 June 1998. See also Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish–Israeli Tie," *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 2, June 1998, pp. 19–29.
  - 21 Kemal Kirisci, "Post Cold War Turkish Security and the Middle East," paper submitted at a conference on "Israel and Turkey – Current Politics and Foreign Policy," Bar-Ilan University, Israel, 14–15 January 1997, p. 16.
  - 22 *Jerusalem Post*, 8 September 1998.
  - 23 With regard to the cooperation between Turkey and Israel in the United States (as a counterweight to Greek and Armenian lobbying), see *Ha'aretz*, 10 March 1996; Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993, p. 226; Amikam Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece: Uneasy Relations in the East-Mediterranean*, London, Frank Cass, 1987, ch. 2.
  - 24 An excellent discussion of the difficult relations between Turkey and the Arab world can be found in Oya Akgonenc Mughisuddin, "Perceptions and Misperceptions in the Making of Foreign Diplomacy: A Study of Turkish–Arab Attitudes until the End of the 1970s," *Turkish Review of Middle East Studies*, Istanbul, Foundation for Middle East and Balkan Studies (OBIV), Annual 7, 1993, pp. 147–169. Two countries only of the Arab

- and Islamic worlds supported Turkey in the Cyprus conflict – Pakistan and Libya. See: Ihsan Gurkan, “Turkish–Israeli Relations and the Middle East Peace Process,” *Turkish Review of Middle East Studies*, Annual 7, 1993, p. 131; Orhan Kologlu, “Turkish–Libyan Relations (1945–1993),” *Turkish Review of Middle East Studies*, Annual 7, 1993, p. 142.
- 25 TDN, 2 November 1997; 7 April 1999; 16 April 1999; *Turkish Probe*, 11 April 1999.
- 26 For discussion of Turkey’s trade relations with the Arab world and the energy component in them, see Ekavi Athanassopoulou, “Turkey and the Black Sea Initiative,” in Theodore A. Coulombis, Thanos M. Veremis and Thanos Dokos (eds), *The Southeast European Yearbook, 1993*, Athens, Greece, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), 1994, pp. 38, 42; Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East*, p. 109; Soysal, “Seventy Years of Turkish–Arab Relations and an Analysis of Turkish–Iraqi Relations (1920–1990),” pp. 64–65; Liel, *Turkey in the Middle East*, pp. 14–16.
- 27 Rubin, “The Gulf Crisis: Origins and Course of Events,” p. 79.
- 28 *Ibid.*, pp. 76–77; 80–81.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- 30 On the Iraqi army see Yigal Sheffy, “The Military Dimension of the Gulf War,” in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Vol. 15, Boulder, CO, San Francisco, CA, and Oxford, Westview Press, 1991, pp. 66–67, 70.
- 31 Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East*, pp. 67–68.
- 32 President Turgut Ozal’s address to the Global Panel (sponsored by the European Studies Centre in Amsterdam), “The Middle East After the War,” Ankara, 9 April 1991, *Studies on Turkish–Arab Relations. Special Issue on Turkey and the Gulf Crisis*, Annual 6, 1991, p. 207; Quotation in Aykan, “Turkey’s Policy in Northern Iraq, 1991–95,” p. 343.
- 33 Arnon Magen, *Ha’aretz*, 19 January 2001.
- 34 For more details see Martin Kramer, “The Invasion of Islam,” in Ami Ayalon (ed.) *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Vol. 14, Boulder, CO, San Francisco, CA, and Oxford, Westview Press, 1990, pp. 195, 196, 200; Martin Kramer, “Islam in the New World Order,” in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Vol. 15, Boulder, CO, San Francisco, CA, and Oxford, Westview Press, 1991, pp. 174–175.
- 35 Background notes, excerpts from Saddam’s National Day Speech on Turkey and Iraq, 17 July 1997. *Middle East Review of International Affairs* (hereafter *MERIA*) Seminar (an Internet journal, ed. by B. Rubin, Bar-Ilan University, Israel), Part 1, 24 October 1997.
- 36 David Fischer, “Nuclear Proliferation: The Case of Iraq,” in Theodore A. Coulombis, Thanos M. Veremis, and Thanos Dokos (eds), *The Southeast European Yearbook, 1993*, Athens, Greece, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), 1994, pp. 135–139.
- 37 Information from the Turkish Embassy, Tel-Aviv.
- 38 Quoted in Aykan, “Turkey’s Policy in Northern Iraq, 1991–95,” p. 343.
- 39 Metin Heper, “The Ottoman Legacy and Turkish Politics,” *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Autumn 2000, pp. 63–82, 69.
- 40 For BSECR see Metin Heper, *Historical Dictionary of Turkey*, Metuchen, NJ, and London, Scarecrow Press, 1994, p. 100.
- 41 *The Economist*, 18 March 1989; 23 February 1991; *Time*, 4 November 1991; William Hale, “Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 4, October 1992, p. 683; Yoav Karni, *Ha’aretz Supplement* (Hebrew), 9 August 1991. For biographical details on Ozal, see Sabri Sayari, “Turgut Ozal,” in Bernard Reich (ed.), *Political Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa: A Biographical Dictionary*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1990, pp. 395–401; Necip Torumtay, *Oregeneral Torumtay’in Anilari* (Memoirs of General Torumtay), Istanbul, Milliyet Yayinlari, 1994, pp. 107–130.
- 42 Ruben Safrastyan, “Turkey and Eurasia in the Aftermath of the September 11 Tragedy: Some Observations on Geopolitics and Foreign Policy,” *The Caucasus and Central Asia*



- Program at the University of California, Berkeley, *Caucasus and Central Asia Newsletter*, No. 1, Winter 2001–2, pp. 3–8.
- 43 Liel, *Turkey in the Middle East*, p. 17. Ankara refused American overtures because of Washington's hostility to Turkey over the Cyprus dispute. Furthermore, between the 1960s and the 1980s, Ankara was taking a more balanced position in its foreign relations: less identification with the West and more sympathy for the Arab countries and Islam.
- 44 On different dates during the month of November 1951, the Egyptian paper, *Ruz-al-Yusuf*, published offensive caricatures about Turkey and its identification with the West. References to them are made by Eliahu Sasson, the Israeli consul in Ankara, in his correspondence with the Foreign Office in Jerusalem, 28 November 1951, Jerusalem, Israel State Archives, 2527/1/a.
- 45 Ismail Soysal, "The Propaganda Campaign against Turkey in Western Europe," *Studies on Turkish–Arab Relations: Special Issue on Turkey and the Gulf Crisis*, Istanbul, Foundation for the Study of Turkish–Arab Relations (TAIV), Annual 6, 1991, p. 131.
- 46 *The Economist*, 20 October 1990; Europa Publications, *The Middle East and North Africa 1994*, London, Europa Publications, 1993, pp. 874, 877; *Foreign Policy Bulletin* (formerly: Department of State Bulletin), Vol. 1, No. 6, May–June 1991, pp. 23–24; Zvi Barel, *Ha'aretz*, 15 July 1994. Aykan, "Turkey's Policy in Northern Iraq, 1991–95," p. 358; Kemal Kirisci, "Turkey and the Muslim Middle East," in Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayari (eds), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000, p. 43.
- 47 *The Economist*, 5 September 1992; Kuniholm, "Turkey and the West," p. 37.
- 48 *Cumhuriyet*, 2 February 1986; statement by Hikmet Cetin, Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Washington Institute's Policy Forum, Washington, DC, 5 May 1998; *TDN*, 28 April 1999.
- 49 Adam Zagorin, "Our Man in Baghdad," *Time*, 30 November 1998; *TDN*, 8 April 1999; *TDN*, 16 April 1999; *Ha'aretz*, 23 February 2001.
- 50 *Ha'aretz*, 12 December 1996; 13 May 1997.
- 51 *Ha'aretz*, 1 July 1998; *International Herald Tribune*, 29 December 1998. Aykan, "Turkey's Policy in Northern Iraq, 1991–95," p. 351.
- 52 Quincy Wright, *A Study of War*, 2nd edn, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1965, p. 653.
- 53 Kuniholm, "Turkey and the West," pp. 37–38; *TDN*, reprinted in *Ha'aretz*, 17 September 1996; Mark Parris, US Ambassador, Ankara, speech before Turkish Young Entrepreneurs Association (YASED), Istanbul, 15 April 1998; Undersecretariat of Foreign Trade of the Turkish Prime Ministry, *TDN*, 10 July 1999.
- 54 Constantine Arvanitopoulos, "American Aid to Greece and Turkey before and after the Cold War," in proceedings of the Conference on USA, Greece, Turkey in the Emerging International System, Athens, 17–20 June 1993.
- 55 *The Economist*, "Survey Turkey," 8 June 1996.
- 56 Athanassopoulou, "Turkey and the Black Sea Initiative," p. 38.
- 57 Aykan, Turkey's Policy in Northern Iraq, 1991–95," p. 345.
- 58 Gareth M. Winrow, "Turkey and the Newly Independent States of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus," *MERIA Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 5, 15 June 1997; Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, pp. 215–216.
- 59 Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, pp. 218–219.
- 60 Morton I. Abramowitz, "Dateline Ankara: Turkey after Ozal," *Foreign Policy*, No. 91, Summer 1993, p. 166; William M. Hale, "Turkey," in Ami Ayalon (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Vol. 15, Boulder, CO, San Francisco, CA, and Oxford, Westview Press, 1991, p. 708.

# 2

## The Kurdish problem

*The Economist's* “Survey of Turkey” might serve as a motto for our discussion:

Turkey is more like a tree, with roots in many different cultures and ethnicities. In its early years it was pruned and trained to grow strictly in one direction: Turkish. Now, in its maturity, its branches tend to go their own way, seeking their own kind of light.<sup>1</sup>

Up until the winter of 1991, there were no Kurds in Turkey, merely “Mountain Turks” – even in this definition an aspect of Turkishness was granted to the Kurds. These people, like other non-Turkish elements, were encouraged to forget their own language and culture, and undergo “Turkification.” Their Kurdish heritage was to be rooted out. The Turkish media mentions that some 8,000 villages and towns have been renamed in Turkish under Article 5542 of Turkish law.<sup>2</sup> Names of mountains and lakes have been changed into Turkish. Kurdish families were asked to give Turkish names to their children. These bans and the prohibition on Kurdish publications – actually in action since the mid-1920s – were slightly lifted in 1991. Still, above all else, Turkey opposes any form of ethnic expression reflecting Kurdish nationalism or inclinations towards autonomy, within Turkey or beyond its borders. Any expression of Kurdish separatism outside Turkey was bound to stir up the millions of Kurds living within its borders – 12 million or more, out of a population of close to 65 million.

As a result of guerrilla and terror campaigns launched since 1984 by the Kurdish Workers Party (the PKK) against the Turkish authorities and Turkish civilians, the government of then Prime Minister, Turgut Ozal, proclaimed (in 1987) a state of emergency. This was imposed in seven provinces, out of Turkey's seventy-six, which are in the southeast of the country and are largely Kurdish populated. Even though power had been restored in Turkey to civil bodies and institutions in 1983 – after it had been rescinded in the 1980 *coup d'état* of General Kenan Evren – policy towards the Kurds continued to be

determined by the army. Also, in the mixed decision-making bodies the military has the upper hand when it comes to the Kurdish issue. The discussions pertaining to the Kurds made by Turkey's National Security Council (NSC) – a body that makes recommendations to the cabinet – often reflect the military stand and are rarely overruled. According to the 1982 constitution the government has to give priority to policy decisions made by the NSC.<sup>3</sup> Philip Robins notes that personal experience induced Turkish politicians, Suleiman Demirel when serving as Prime Minister in particular, to refrain from reducing the army's role in relation to the Kurds. On two occasions, in 1971 and 1980, while officiating as Prime Minister, Demirel had been subjected to military interventions, and he preferred to avoid granting the army a pretext for intervening a third time.<sup>4</sup>

But much of the harm that was sustained by Turkey as a result of the Gulf War had to do with the Kurdish issue. As noted above, following the war, some 700,000 Kurds fled the Iraqi army in the direction of Turkey. Turkey alleged that Saddam chased the Kurds into its territory in revenge for Turkish aid to the coalition forces in the Gulf fighting. Bearing in mind his record, Saddam could have easily annihilated the Kurds; the fact that he chose to drive them into Turkey shows it was vindictiveness, claimed Turkey. Instead of blaming Iraq for the travails of the Kurdish refugees, Western media showed Turkish soldiers beating Kurdish refugees as they tried to cross into Turkish territory. Ankara was incensed: hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees had received assistance in Turkish army installations along the border with Iraq. Thousands more had found refuge inside Turkey itself, and Turkey had expended some 1.6 million dollar *a day* for an extended period on the welfare of these refugees.<sup>5</sup>

Baghdad's loss of authority in northern Iraq, when the "Safe Zone" was allotted to the Kurds, did not leave a vacuum for long. The PKK took root in northern Iraq, around the towns of Kerkuk, Sulaymaniya, Dukan, Arbil and Zakho. From there it conducted a campaign of terror against Turkey. Increasingly, in a conflict that verged on civil war, the damage was enormous, with up to sixty casualties daily on both sides. In such an atmosphere, the average Turk regarded any concession to the Kurds – even if merely social or cultural – as capitulation to terrorism and a recipe for Turkey's territorial disintegration. And, since the army dictated policy towards the Kurdish rebellion, non-military options have been removed from the range of means available to Turkey in dealing with the uprising. Turkey's own Kurds have given up moderation and a willingness to come to an understanding with, and integration into, the Turkish mainstream. Their support was gradually moving towards the PKK, the solution ultimately to pursue separation from Turkey, and the creation of Kurdish statehood. The upheaval in the southeast that in the 1970s resulted primarily from economic reasons, became politicized and, in the 1980s, violent, and even more so in the 1990s. In sum, during the 1990s, the Kurdish problem confronted Turkey with a complex challenge that threatened its territorial integrity and overshadowed its external relations.

The PKK was indeed making efforts to gain control over areas of southeastern Turkey, functioning in various domains as a fully-fledged government, thereby undermining the authority of Ankara. The government controlled enclaves of military bases, defended by armor and artillery and yet was powerless to protect people still collaborating with them. Bakers discovered delivering bread to an army base were put to death by the PKK. Fuel stations serving the authorities were set alight and the owners killed. State institutions such as Turkish Airlines, for example, have been closely guarded, operating, in effect, out of fortresses. At nightfall, virtually all semblance of Turkish rule vanished: the PKK ruled the roost. Inhabitants were required to pay taxes to the PKK, on pain of death. Many dared not serve in government-sponsored paramilitary organizations (like the Village Guards – see p. 51), or other state posts for fear of being marked “as revolutionary targets.” Local inhabitants were forbidden to join any Turkish political party. Legal matters were entrusted exclusively to “people’s courts.” The distribution or sale of newspapers published in Istanbul or Ankara was banned in Kurdish areas as was watching television. Inhabitants were required to remove television antennas “so that justice is not merely done; it is seen to be done.” Schools experienced destruction: they were regarded by the PKK as emblems of “Turkish imperialism,” belong to the “colonial assimilation system,” from which the Kurdish culture and language were omitted. Teachers who refused to resign risked their lives: forty-seven teachers were murdered in the course of 1993 alone; more than 100 teachers were murdered for teaching Turkish to Kurdish children. Altogether some 500 schools were burnt and 3,060 closed down. All types of family planning were resisted by the PKK: the organization regarded these as racist acts done by Ankara to reduce the Kurdish population in the southeastern provinces of Turkey. Gambling in any form was forbidden, as was excessive consumption of alcohol. Drunkenness was a criminal offence. In some places, the PKK enforced a total ban on the sale of alcohol. Alcohol vendors courted a fine of 50 million Turkish pounds – about 1,000 US dollars. Candidates for local elections had to have prior clearance from the PKK.<sup>6</sup>

The activities of the PKK were financed by millions of dollars in donations – some extracted under duress from Kurds working in Europe. (There are 500,000 Kurds living in Western Europe, 400,000 of them in Germany.) Kurdish-owned businesses, in Turkey or elsewhere, paid a “revolutionary tax.” Millions of dollars flowed into PKK coffers from the drug trade: the organization has controlled 30–40 percent of the heroin traffic from Afghanistan, Iran and Lebanon, which passes through Turkey on its way to Europe.<sup>7</sup> Some 5,000 trained PKK fighters were active inside Turkey, supported by 150,000 militiamen and 2 million Turkish Kurd sympathizers. Until the early 1990s, the PKK avoided pitched battles with the Turkish army. Instead, they undertook daring raids on police vehicles and bases, officers’ clubs and other military installations. As shown below, both contenders changed radically their strategies: the PKK, using its bases in northern Iraq, began to operate as a conventional army. On its part, Turkey greatly improved its anti-guerrilla warfare, but also conducted an effective conventional

war against the PKK. The moment the PKK bore more signs of a regular army and less of an underground organization, the Turkish army could exert more successfully its supremacy, resulting from it being a highly modernized conventional army now fighting another one, which only recently was an agrarian guerilla group (see pp. 43–44).<sup>8</sup>

Awareness of the aims and character of the conflict and the changes it has undergone are vital for an understanding of the Turkish–Kurdish problem, and of the role of the “Safe Zone” in the conflict. Abdullah Ocalan, also known as “Apo,” or “uncle” – his followers known as “Apocu’s” – founded the PKK in November 1978, when he was still a political science student at Ankara University. Indeed, Henry Barkey attributes the discovery of Kurdishness and the process of politization by students and workers of Kurdish origin, to large migration movements inside Turkey. These people, who previously had become thoroughly Turkish, migrated from the rural areas to Turkey’s metropolitan industrial and educational centers, Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara.<sup>9</sup> After the September 1980 coup in Turkey, Ocalan – the name means “revenge” – fled to Lebanon. From there, and from Syria or Syrian-controlled territory, he directed the Kurdish uprising from 15 August 1984 until his capture by the Turks in February 1999. The accepted version is that the PKK rebellion had begun with the 15 August attack, in which thirty Turkish soldiers and citizens were killed.

Ocalan’s statements were pointed: “The Kemalists were wrong. They claimed to have buried the Kurds, but we tore off our burial-shrouds”; or “The whole of Kurdistan has been cleared [of its Kurdish population] by the Turks; is it so bad if the PKK clears [i.e. massacres] a few villages?” These and similar utterances by Ocalan, give an inkling of the degree of hostility and brutality involved in their campaigns. (The Kurdish organization had a special trademark: it hacked off the noses of its opponents.) The PKK appeared to be the world’s most vicious terrorist underground. Some – not exclusively Turks – compared its brutality with that of the Cambodian Khmer Rouge, or Peru’s “Shining Path” underground. The PKK was held responsible for the murder of thousands of innocent Turkish Kurds, aimed at dissuading collaboration with the Turkish authorities, or drumming up support. To Ocalan at least, the objective was to reduce Turkey to a prolonged state of chaos and disorder. Such a state of affairs would ultimately provoke another military coup, putting an end to democracy and isolating Turkey in the international community. This would make foreign intervention on behalf of the Kurds more likely, resulting in the imposition of a sort of a Kurdish “Safe Haven” *inside* Turkey, similar to the one the United Nations has enforced in northern Iraq for the Iraqi Kurds. One could question the prudence of these aims and their relevance to Turkey’s realities or to the readiness of the international community to do something for the benefit of the Kurds *inside* Turkey. One way or another, according to Turkish interpretation, such a conflict as Ocalan had envisaged, was supposed to smooth the path toward the fulfillment of PKK aspirations: Kurdish self-determination.<sup>10</sup>

The Kurds have rebelled sixteen times against the Turks over the past seventy years. From the 1930s to the 1960s, their rebellions, confined to the southeastern provinces, were generally handled effectively by the Turkish authorities. The PKK rebellion launched in 1984 is the seventeenth (or the twenty-eighth or twenty-ninth according to other counts).<sup>11</sup> It developed into all-out war, embracing seventeen provinces in southeastern Turkey. Of all the campaigns the Kurds have waged, that of 1984 was the longest, the bloodiest, and at times the most successful from their point of view. The total death toll so far was 34,000. The campaign has been extended to Turkey's main cities and tourist centers, and to West European capitals.

During its early stages the PKK prudently avoided evolving into a regular army, thereby excluding the possibility that the Turkish army would be able to exploit its military superiority. The underground's guerilla forays and vicious terrorism destabilized Turkish rule in the southeastern provinces, preventing the region's economic development. In particular, the PKK targeted the GAP water development project in Turkey's southeast because, among its objectives, the GAP is designed to restrict the Kurds' nationalist zeal by moderating the social and economic discrimination of which they complain.

If the exploits of the seventeenth Kurdish uprising were exceptional, Turkish repression was equally extreme and unprecedented. Alas, it goaded entire Kurdish populations, hitherto passive, into active support for the underground. The Generals' coup of 1980 took the anarchy and violence of the late 1970s as a pretext for military intervention in domestic politics. The Turkish response thus made the 1980 coup a turning point in the Kurdish campaign, with counter-terrorism at its strongest in the entire history of the Turkish republic. The Kurdish uprising, likewise a turning point, could thus be largely attributed to the excessive nature of Turkish counter-measures which followed the 1980 coup. A vicious circle had thus been created.

Escalation of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict sidelined moderates on both sides. The PKK appeared to be the sole option open to the Kurds. Kurdish leaders displayed growing disdain for the Turkish state and their declarations were increasingly separatist. Mass demonstrations, strikes in city centers, and protest actions attracted ever-growing numbers from the Kurdish community in Turkey and elsewhere. The red, yellow and green colors of the Kurdish flag – banned in Turkey – have been increasingly evident in the Kurds' dress and publications. The Kurdish challenge is not sustained exclusively by local motivation; the conflict with Turkey is not the only ground from which it emerges. It draws upon worldwide demands for greater democracy, and the erosion of all-embracing ideologies such as communism or Kemalism, with their intolerance of non-conformists and minorities. In this respect, the Kurdish uprising did not differ from a broad global tide that reflected a desire for greater ethnic and national self-expression.<sup>12</sup>

### The “Safe Zone” in northern Iraq

The “Safe Zone” in northern Iraq, along with the various interpretations placed on it by the parties involved, also represents a turning point in the Kurdish–Turkish conflict. In the PKK view, Kurdish soil has been, for the first time, under Kurdish rule; for the first time, Kurds are enjoying the trappings of statehood and sovereignty over territory. From this to statehood, the distance could be short. Ostensibly, the PKK use of this territory as a base of anti-Turkish forays improved the Kurd positions in their campaign for an independent Kurdistan. But unlike the PKK, the Kurds of northern Iraq – grasping the “Safe Zone’s” dependency upon Turkey – interpreted their control thereof as something *less* than a state. Moreover, the Kurds of northern Iraq, Massoud Barazani’s Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in particular, have gone so far as to collaborate with the Turkish government against the PKK. Their dependency upon Turkey is total with regard to supplies as well as to defense against Iraqi attacks.

Matters were even more complex: since October 1991, Turkish territory has hosted a multinational air force, composed largely of American planes and troops, but also including crews and air crafts from France, Britain and Turkey, under Turkish and American command. Their mission is the defense of the “Safe Zone.” Turkey has a veto with regard to operations over Iraqi territory. Furthermore, there is a decades-old understanding between Baghdad and Ankara regarding the need to restrict – or crush – any expression of Kurdish national aspirations. The integrity of Turkey and Iraq would be prejudiced should an independent Kurdistan emerge on their territories. A classical expression of this understanding is the protest from Baghdad – invariably belated and lukewarm – against the Turkish army’s forays into Iraqi territory in its operations against the Kurdish rebels.

For its part, Turkey could not help perceiving the qualitative benefits the “Safe Zone” offered the PKK in its anti-Turkish operations. Moreover, these benefits also affected the Kurds in Turkey. Their resounding dissatisfaction, now expressed more overtly and extensively than ever before, could be attributed in part to the effect transmitted by the “Safe Zone.” A *de facto* Kurdish entity has emerged in northern Iraq, and it would be foolish to assume that it has no effect upon the feelings of discrimination of Turkey’s Kurds or their national aspirations.

The “Safe Zone” far exceeds its post-Gulf War role as a dumping ground for Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq. It now boasts some of the trappings of statehood, including an elected parliament that represents the 3.6 million Iraqi Kurds who live there (a sixth of Iraq’s population). But it faces grave problems, whose solutions entail cooperation with Turkey against the PKK, for it is Ankara that has enabled the zone to survive its difficulties with Baghdad. During the 1990s Iraq itself was under siege, and not only denied the zone foodstuffs and medicines, but left it open to incursion and agricultural theft. The zone receives Western aid supplies (150 million dollars annually) through the Turkish border.

In effect, this dependency requires the Kurds to make do with autonomy, rather than statehood: local Kurds fear that proclamation of a state would result in their abandonment by Turkey and the West. The consequence is paradoxical. The Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq will survive as long as it is under threat from Saddam Hussein, and has not been taken over by the PKK. When the Iraqi threat is removed, the Western multinational air force will withdraw. Should the PKK gain control, Turkey will take action against the "Safe Zone." This bizarre rationale leads the Kurds of the "Safe Zone" to collaborate with the Turkish government against the PKK. As *The Economist* put it: in return for a measure of independence in the "Safe Zone," Iraqi Kurds were willing to sacrifice millions of Turkish Kurds.<sup>13</sup>

The gravest outcome is the conclusion drawn by the Ankara authorities. From Ankara's point of view, experience with the "Safe Zone" and the qualitative changes it has introduced into the conflict, merely demonstrate that if this is how matters evolve from Kurdish autonomy outside Turkey's borders, they can only get worse should any kind of Kurdish entity be established actually on Turkish soil. Moreover, the aggravation of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict that followed the Gulf War caused many Turkish army circles to believe that perhaps it would be in Ankara's interest to have the Iraqi army back in northern Iraq.<sup>14</sup>

Worthy of further consideration is the rift between the Kurds of northern Iraq and the Turkish Kurds, including the PKK. The PKK regards the "Safe Zone" as a liberated Kurdish territory, meaning, in effect, that it advocates the dismemberment of Iraq, whereas the Iraqi Kurds want a united Iraq and, as noted, are prepared to settle for autonomy. But the PKK also attempted to prevent the transportation of supply trucks from Turkey into the "Safe Zone." As a result, the inhabitants of the zone charge that Saddam Hussein, who is equally interested in undermining the "Safe Zone," supports the PKK.<sup>15</sup>

But there are other reasons for the rift between the Turkish Kurds and their Iraqi brethren. Having long been denied Kurdish cultural expression, most Turkish Kurds are no longer able to read or write their own language. They even encounter difficulties in talking with their Iraqi brethren. For instance, Abdullah Ocalan, who was born in 1949 in the province of Sanliurfa in southeast Turkey, speaks Turkish but has only a poor grasp of some Kurdish dialects. ("Apo . . . did not know Kurdish when I met him in 1991. In our interview at the [Syrian controlled Lebanese] Bekaa he told me that he speaks Turkish, gives orders in Turkish and think in Turkish.")<sup>16</sup> Turkification and urbanization have made Turkish the language of the Kurds of Turkey's cities, although Kurdish is still spoken in the villages. As a result, thousands of modern concepts are conspicuous by their absence from the Kurdish spoken in Turkey. Nor are there in Turkey any Kurdish translations of literary works. The Kurds of Iraq, on the other hand, were too strong, and too concentrated, to be successfully subjected to cultural "Iraqification." They preserved their language and culture, employing the Arabic alphabet which, it will be recalled, is not in use in Turkey. It is they who set the tone for "Kurdishness," and they look down on their Turkish



counterparts as illiterates. Over the centuries, countless accounts have pointed to disunity, tribalism, and factionalism as the prime reasons for the Kurds' failure to achieve self-determination. Their dispersion among five states (Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and parts of the former Soviet Union) ensures that the concern of each country for its integrity induces the five to make common cause in repressing the Kurds.

Even the Kurdish language, which should have served to unify the different branches of the Kurdish people, uses dissimilar dialects and, as referred to previously, different alphabets: Arabic in Iraq, Latin in Turkey, Cyrillic in the former Soviet Union. There are further divisive factors at work. The only factor unifying the Kurds is their history, and their heroic leader Salah al-Din (1139–93), Kurdish founder of the Ayyubid Dynasty that once ruled the region and captured Jerusalem from the Crusaders. The remote past, however, is inadequate to alleviate the torments of the divisive present. For example, a vicious struggle is intermittently going on between the Barazani's KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) under Jalal Talabani, for the political and economic control of the "Safe Haven."<sup>17</sup>

Various attempts at mediation over the past few years have produced only temporary truces among the Kurdish factions. The 1990s' last attempt was undertaken in Washington (August–September 1998) by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Washington, needless to say, prefers a united Kurdish front in northern Iraq, able to withstand Saddam Hussein. Talabani and Barazani – both from different regions of Kurdistan and speaking different dialects of the language – agreed on a division of the power and the income from duties imposed on goods coming into the "Safe Zone." They also agreed to hold elections: the results would determine the proportional shares of the income. A breakthrough was the KDP's stated willingness to share its greater revenues with the PUK as the first step in the process of reconciliation. The sides also endorsed a federative basis for a post-Saddam Iraq, implying a Kurdish state, within a federative Iraq.

Agreement or not, it is clear to everyone that internal Kurdish rivalries continue to tempt Saddam. Barazani and Talabani receive their oil from Iraq – part of it they sell abroad – hence, their ability to turn against Baghdad is limited. These rivalries also increase the dependence of the "Safe Zone" on the West and on Turkey, and certainly weakens Kurdish interests vis-à-vis Turkey. Each and all of the Kurdish factions are interested in joining forces with some country or some neighboring elements – including Baghdad – in order to gain some advantage over the other factions, even if it is only temporary. That is what happened in August of 1996 when Barzani joined up with the Iraqi army to defeat the Talaban.

As Alan Makovsky explains, Turkey and its neighbors prefer the Kurds being divided, and certainly worry deeply about the possible emergence of an independent or even autonomous Kurdish entity in Iraq that would further fuel separatist sentiments among their own Kurdish communities, Turkey in particular. Iran, Syria, Iraq, and Turkey will eventually object to the Barazani–Talabani agreement and try to undermine it.<sup>18</sup>

### Turkey and the Kurds: Ankara's response

Overall, official Turkish reaction to the Kurdish problem could be divided into its social, economic and, more prominently, military responses. Ankara concluded that in order to assure a successful economic revival of the southeastern provinces – home of half of its Kurdish population – it was vital to eliminate the PKK. The PKK, for its part, realized that its own success depended, *inter alia*, on foiling Turkish policy to reduce the disparities between the Kurds and the rest of the population. Accordingly, as mentioned earlier, the GAP project became a “Fascist Target” for PKK attacks.

In fact, GAP's success has yet to be seen. The construction of dams and reservoirs on the Euphrates entailed the inundation of hundreds of Kurdish villages, forcing thousands of Kurds off their land and filling Turkey's cities with disgruntled proletarian and petit bourgeois elements. Designed to reduce disparities between Turks and Kurds, so far GAP has succeeded in lining the pockets of landowners and tribal chiefs, without raising the living standards of the Kurdish peasant masses. It is questionable whether Ankara will succeed, in the foreseeable future, in ameliorating the lot of its millions of Kurdish subjects.

All the data concerning figures for the Kurds are slanted, either for or against Kurdish aspirations. Official Turkish statistics set the number of Kurds at 7.1 percent of the overall population, i.e. less than 5 million out of 65 million. The Kurds claim to constitute 24 percent. Other estimations give any number between 10 and 20 million Kurds who live in Turkey. A figure appearing to be true would be around 13 percent, or about 9 million. (A 1999 nationwide survey has found that only 1.4 percent of Turkish citizens identified themselves as Kurds.)<sup>19</sup> A large majority living in the big cities of western and central Turkey and are part of mainstream Turkish life. Six million to 8 million Kurds live in the southeast and eastern provinces. Natural increase among the Kurds is high – 3.8 percent annually in rural areas, 2.9 percent in the cities. The Turkish average in the early 1990s was of 2.7 and 2.4 percent, respectively. The dramatic decline in the Turkish average at the end of the 1990s – which stood at 1.5 percent – is not matched by a similar Kurdish reduction.

The Kurdish populated southeast Turkey – where some 15 percent of the population live – has always been a poor area. It produces only 4 percent of Turkey's GDP and 2 percent of its industrial output. Unemployment in the Kurdish sector is 25 percent – double the rate for the rest of the country. Per capita income of the Turks is double the Kurdish average. Actually, per capita income in the Kurdish provinces is as low as one-tenth that of Istanbul. According to the United Nations' latest Human Development Index, Turkey as a whole is ranked seventy-fourth among the countries of the world, with a point value of 0.778 (on a scale of zero to one). The index for southeastern Anatolia is as low as 0.585 points. And while the average number of Ankara students per class is seventy, and per teacher twenty-nine, it is eighty-six in the southeastern town of Sirnak. The value of per capita bank deposits in Turkey as a whole was 167 million Turkish

lira (TL), i.e. 417.5 dollars (at the beginning of 1999). The figure for the south-east is as low as TL10 million (25 dollars). Some figures further illustrate the gap between Turkey's west and east. While per capita income is 7,882 dollars in Kocaeli, an industrial and commercial center an hour away from Istanbul, it is merely 774 dollars in the eastern province of Agri. A southeastern Anatolia family's average monthly income was TL30 million (75 dollars) at the beginning of 1999, which is much lower than the national monthly minimum wage of TL78 million (195 dollars). One can safely sum up that Turkey's rising prosperity since the 1980s (see Chapter 3), has bypassed the largely Kurdish southeastern provinces. Aegean and Mediterranean cities flourish while rural Anatolia remains backward. Indeed, a Turkish officer who had been fighting the PKK, and thus became acquainted with the population in the southeastern provinces of Turkey, described the situation there as "being alive is the only luxury that the people of these areas have."<sup>20</sup>

As already noted and further illustrated by these grim statistics, Turkey's non-military response to the conflict with the Kurds has been marginal, largely confined to sporadic efforts to bridging social and economic gaps, while ignoring the problem's national aspects. Dogu Ergil from Ankara University, explained that there is no "Kurdish Question" in Turkey but a "Turkish Question;" "Kurdishness cannot be properly placed within the Turkishness that constitutes the basic attributes of citizenship in the Republic of Turkey."<sup>21</sup> Soon after the First World War, with the loss of Arab provinces, the Armenian community, the population exchange with Greece, etc., the Turkish official inclination towards pluralism of cultures was abandoned. Unity, uniformity, and the ideology of Turkish nationalism were created as a method of nation-building. When citizenship was based on Turkishness, members of other ethnic groups living in Turkey had to accept it, keeping, if they wished, the religious and cultural parts of their ethnic group and peacefully or forcefully losing the non-cultural-religious parts (i.e. political and national identities). Accordingly, during the twentieth century millions of Kurds have integrated into the Turkish society, economy, culture, and politics. Two million marriages were held between Turks and Kurds.<sup>22</sup>

Still, 90 percent of the Kurds living in Turkey in the 1920s were living along tribal lines under the strong control of powerful Kurdish landlords (*agas*). The tribal cleavages persisted and were further aggravated by keen competition for meager resources. Unity – neither Turkish, not even Kurdish – did not prevail. Successive uprisings that started in 1925 led southeastern Turkey to live in constant strife and under a state of siege. The area was out of touch with the rest of the society. The government invested little in an area that it did not trust much, explained Dogu Ergil. Poverty and detachment, together with the traditional character of the southeast rendered the area the least integrated part of Turkey.<sup>23</sup>

It was not until the early 1970s that a strong Kurdish movement appeared on the political scene. Kurds cooperated then with the Kurdish leftist movement. The harsh bans (e.g. on the use of the Kurdish language, television and

radio, as previously mentioned) imposed by the military were lifted in 1991, but rejection of Kurdish education continued. When Turkey's left – the only available place for Kurds to express opposition – had been crushed by the military, the more militant Kurds opted for an armed struggle. In this atmosphere the PKK was conceived (in 1978), based on a contradictory Marxist-Leninist-Kurdish-Muslim national ideology, and the acts of terror began (in 1984).

Following harsh counter-measures that the Turkish government took, the PKK was seen as the sole road for many Kurds. The hit-and-run and guerrilla tactics that the PKK employed in the mountains of southeast Turkey seriously damaged the ill-prepared Turkish troops. The tide turned against the Kurdish organization only in the early 1990s, when the PKK moved into larger units and applied conventional warfare, thereby facilitating the supremacy of Turkey's conventional army. Also, useful intelligence was collected from the "Safe Zone" by Turkish units as well as by forces belonging to the Operation Provide Comfort. It enormously helped in neutralizing the PKK bases there. Specially trained Turkish commando, police and helicopter units were made available for combat, equipped with the appropriate gear. Then Turkey managed to confine PKK activity to specific rural areas and, eventually, got the upper hand in those places as well.

The turning point in the confrontation with the PKK was the summer and winter of 1991, i.e. at the time of the Iraqi defeat in the Gulf War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, with both events closely linked to the waning of the cold war. The weakening of Syria that resulted from Moscow disassociating itself from its former allies also helped the Turkish strategists in their stage B of their anti-PKK campaign. Pulverizing the Kurdish resistance internally (stage A) was followed by the crushing of international support given to the PKK, be it by raids deep into northern Iraq or by intimidating Syria (see pp. 44, 48–49). Much of the Turkish force previously deployed along the Turkish-Iraqi and the Turkish-Soviet borders – about 200,000 troops – was assigned to the war against the Kurdish underground. Conventional warfare tactics and weapons that for years were directed at the threats that Turkey faced from its neighbors and from its cold war commitments had to be redirected to the mountains and the guerillas. Politically, the home front became favorable and the determination to beat the PKK by military means increased with the death of Turgut Ozal (1993). The latter was the last Turkish politician to advocate other than purely military means to end the Kurdish violence. The Turkish military then took the lead, viewing the PKK as a strategic threat – formerly there were various opinions as to the type of problem Turkey was facing (riots, a local uprising, a limited insurrection, etc.) – and that strategic threat had to be crushed by any means. Thus, a combination of domestic and external factors assisted Turkey to victory over the PKK.

A number of major initiatives helped the Turkish military. The first, which started in 1995, was the importance of consolidating an area, how remote it was, how hectic it was, and how demanding it was to keep a permanent military

presence there. A visitor to Turkish troops holding a remote position in the southeast of the country described the miseries the soldiers had to endure: "You are lying in a place where 450 military personnel have only one telephone, and can take a shower only once every three weeks [and] without seeing your family for months."<sup>24</sup> The tactics of consolidating an area was not always appreciated: on several occasions troops moved from a base in the lowlands to a hilly area, dispersed the PKK, and returned to base. The guerrillas returned to the area and the soldiers had to repeat the operation. "Nothing can be worse for morale," commented a Turkish officer.<sup>25</sup>

The second successful tactic was the employment of mixed ground and air force anti-guerrilla warfare. The combination of lightly armed, tough special forces supported by flying artillery and the flexibility and maneuverability of the helicopter were dreaded by the PKK. These teams were dispatched along the frontier with Iraq and into northern Iraq itself, denying the PKK their traditional strongholds and forcing them to fight, even in winter. In a tactic called "The Tiger Hunt," commandos worked in tightening concentric circles to trap their prey. "If you see five PKKs send in 100 troops," was the motto.<sup>26</sup> Fighting during winter in the freezing and snowy mountain crests of southeast Anatolia was clearly a revolution. Never before tried, it enabled the PKK to winter there and to prepare itself for its spring and summer offensives. The novelty caused a Turkish General to compare it to the stubborn decision of Vice Admiral Louis Mountbatten during the Second World War to thrust into the jungles of Burma during the monsoon season, another non-combat time. The third influential move was to separate the PKK, its headquarters and bases outside Turkey, both in Syria and Iraq, and by so doing curtailing the logistics the organization enjoyed (hospitals, for instance) in countries like Russia and the Ukraine. The supply lines of the PKK were thus cut off. In evicting Abdullah Ocalan from Damascus (October 1998), Turkey was implicitly assisted by its recent security contacts with Israel, and more so by the image they created on Syria. Being threatened by a potential north-south Turkish-Israeli squeeze, President Assad gave in and expelled Ocalan.<sup>27</sup> Simultaneously, the links between the PKK and external forces and foreign countries made it easy to accuse the organization of having no authentic roots in Turkey, of being manipulated by others, and of pursuing the policies of anti-Turkish international elements and ideologies. Another Turkish move that left a continuous detrimental impact on the PKK was the successful hit on the organization's leadership. Abdullah Ocalan is the most well-known case. Another case of impressive impact was the capture in April 1998 of Semdin Sakik, second-in-command of the PKK. True, there was no short of successors, yet it greatly assisted Turkey that the PKK leadership had to run for their lives or for fear of being captured by the Turkish military instead of terrorizing Turkey.

## Turkey and the Kurds: cultural aspects

Kurds resident in Turkey are “Turkish citizens,” “Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin,” “people of separatist inclinations” and, as already mentioned, “Mountain Turks.” Kurds, or people of Kurdish origin, are Turks or “citizens identified as Kurds.” Kurds living in Iraq are “northern Iraqis,” or “the groups in northern Iraq,” or “citizens of northern Iraq,” or “kinsmen of our citizens on the far side of the border.” Their leaders are the “tribal chiefs of northern Iraq.” Members of the PKK are “terrorists” or “separatists.” The conflict in the southeastern provinces of the country is referred to as “the situation,” seldom “the problem.” But not “a Kurdish problem: there is only a terrorism problem,” or a “problem [which is] a product of the growing disparity in socioeconomic income level.” A broader interpretation of the issue by a Turkish newspaper introduces the reader to new and surprising inputs:

There is no problem such as the “Kurdish problem” in Turkey. However, a PKK problem, supported by the Christian West, Zionism, Russia, Greece, Syria and many others – this does exist. The Kurdish state is not what the Kurds want but what the U.S. and the E.U. want in order to establish a mandate in the Middle East. The Kurdish state is also essential for the realization of the Greater Israel and Greater Armenia projects.<sup>28</sup>

Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit made it clear that the issue Turkey is faced with in its southeast is not a Kurdish problem but a lack of economic and social reforms. Ecevit explained that it was the cessation of trade with Iraq, more specifically the closure of the Habur Gate trade point in accordance with the UN economic embargo, plus Iraqi debts, that caused hardships to the region. This is the essence of the problem, not the “stories” and “legends” voiced by the PKK or by its supporters in the West. Also, “[It is not an] ‘ethnic’ or ‘Kurdish’ issue, as many Europeans like to call it. The problems and ailments of these regions are largely due to their semi-feudal heritage. In those districts of southeastern Turkey where economic and social development have reached a certain level, terrorism has visibly abated.”<sup>29</sup> In short, as Mesut Yegen put it, there is banditry, smuggling, and tribalism, but no “Kurdishness [in] the Kurdish question:”

[T]he discourse of the Turkish state necessarily reads the Kurdish question in terms of the tensions between the past and the present; tradition and modernity; the periphery and the center; Islam and reason. Being a necessary outcome of a particular discursive formation, this reading led to the Kurdish question being reconstituted as an issue of reactionary politics; of tribal resistance and of regional backwardness.<sup>30</sup>

Recognition of the Kurds as a community distinct from the Turks, even negotiating with them thus acknowledging them as a distinct community, is perceived by most Turkish parties as the emergence of Turkey’s “private nightmare,” the “unravelling of a single thread, that will entail disintegration of the entire fabric.” Turkey contains fifty-one ethnic elements or religious communities distinct from

the Turkish majority. Some are tiny, like the Jewish community. Others number millions, such as the Kurds, or the Alevis. Hence, you granted the Kurds special treatment and the monolithic Kemalist conception is gravely harmed.<sup>31</sup>

The August 1920 Treaty of Sevres is often mentioned in Turkey, by Turkish media and by Turkish politicians, and Turks are repeatedly warned against a new Sevres. True, Sevres was never ratified but was superseded by the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923, which reflected the victory of the Turks, led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, in their war of independence against Allied forces. But Sevres was imposed upon the Ottoman Empire by the victors in the First World War, the West, a lesson not to be forgotten in Turkey. The treaty stripped Turkey of its Arab colonies, virtually of all Eastern Thrace, of the Aegean islands, and of the Dodecanese. International control was to be set up on various Turkish ports and rivers (Constantinople, Smyrna, Alexandretta, the Maritsa River, etc.). The Straits of Istanbul and the adjacent territory on the Asiatic mainland were to be demilitarized and handed over to an international commission. Western Thrace was ceded to Greece. The Ottoman army could be no more than 50,000 strong, all aircraft were to be surrendered together with all the navy, except a few ships. In addition, the treaty granted statehood to the Armenians and local autonomy to the Kurds, at the expense of Turkey's integrity.

To many Turks, Sevres is not a name of a small French town of northern France, famous for its porcelain industry, but it is synonymous with "Munich." To this day, they are convinced that the West is merely waiting for an opportune moment to put the Sevres plan into effect. Accordingly, any utterance drawing a distinction between Kurds and Turks is unacceptable in Turkey – it is a repetition of Sevres. The anti-Sevres formula thus produces an overwhelming Kemalist unity, and excludes any deviations:

[I]nstead of smoothing relations between the various elements in our society, our political cadres have long intentionally or unintentionally encouraged the deepening of the fragmentation among those elements through left-right, secular-fundamentalist, Alawite-Sunni differentials, favoritism towards certain religious sects, political flirting with local notables, regional variations in industrialization and regional discrepancies in income distributions. The long delay in smoothing all of these disparities in society unfortunately created a suitable climate for certain external circles to play with the Kurdish card once again . . . [W]e ourselves have been partially creating a suitable climate for those dreamers, who are now getting excited that they may have an opportunity in reviving the Sevres treaty.<sup>32</sup>

Even granting the Kurds self-rule – along the lines of the autonomy granted to Spain's minorities (e.g. the Basques) – is rejected in Turkey: "We are not the Iberian Peninsula, and our southern neighbor is not Andorra." The implication is that Turkey's neighbors are just waiting for an opportunity for territorial retribution: Syria, for example, who wants the restoration of Alexandretta. Hence, any erosion of Turkey's ethnic integrity would merely serve those ends. After all, claim the Turks – in line with Turkey's Kemalist philosophy that rules out a homeland containing more than a single nationality – the Kurds are everywhere

among us; Kurdish statehood would accordingly entail an unthinkable population exchange involving millions of Kurds and Turks. For its part, the argument continues, Turkey has never demanded autonomy, or separation, or territorial dismemberment, as a solution for the millions of Turkmens in Iraq, or the million or more Turks in Bulgaria, or the 100,000 Turks in Greece, in Western Thracia. (See Chapter 6.) Why then, the question is, should the Kurds of Turkey deserve preferential treatment? They should settle for the same equal rights, and religious and cultural freedoms that Ankara asks for Turkish ethnic communities in foreign countries.<sup>33</sup> As is well known, the Kurds do not follow the Turkish example but insist on recognition of their rights.

The Turkish response is firm and unequivocal: the use of military force and, as described by Turkish media, the resort to a scorched earth policy. This verges, in some views, on civil war tactics. The few Turkish attempts to consider the conflict in non-military terms have failed. Even the apparent moderation exhibited by Turgut Ozal and Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, owed more to Turkey's wish to elicit favorable reactions in the West than to a genuine change of policy towards the Kurds. As already mentioned, In January 1991, just before the Gulf War, President Ozal proposed abrogation of some restrictions on Kurdish cultural and linguistic expression. In July 1995, Tansu Ciller proposed to enhance freedom of expression, implying that Kurds, too, would enjoy greater liberty.

One may expect that greater freedom of expression will enable Turkish citizens to voice criticism of their government. As for the Kurds, for the time being they do not enjoy the freedom of any kind of cultural organization – as Kurds. One can expect them to continue and labor under various restrictions. But changes do occur. For example, as of 1991 the Kurds can speak their own language. A public conversation in Kurdish or playing Kurdish music is no longer considered illegal. Other changes – some of a macabre nature – were reported in the Turkish paper, *Hurriyet*: in order to improve its image the Turkish army has decided that the bodies of Kurdish rebels will no longer be publicly displayed in the villages. Furthermore, only women or policewomen will conduct body searches on Kurdish women. Turkish soldiers have been ordered to stop bargaining in Kurdish shops. The Turkish Foreign Office also provides information about Turkish soldiers, accused of crimes against Kurdish citizens: in 1994 out of 1,194 cases, fifteen ended in conviction. In 1995, 962 cases were investigated and twenty ended in conviction.<sup>34</sup>

In 1987, it will be recalled, a state of emergency was proclaimed in Turkey's southeastern provinces (Diyarbakir, Elazig, Siirt, Tunceli, Van, Batman, Sirnak). Of Turkey's four army corps, two were stationed in these provinces; over 250,000 soldiers were employed in suppressing terror and the Kurdish uprising. In pursuit of a policy designed to deny PKK rebels geographical and human shelter, the army has burned down some 30 million acres of woodland in the past decade – 25 million acres in East Anatolia alone. Over 1,500 villages were razed to the ground to deny the PKK its human hinterland. Some set the figure at 3,478 residential areas, of which 905 are villages and 2,523 are hamlets, from



which 401,328 people were evacuated. Conversely, government sources attributed this migration to economic reasons (35 percent), and to PKK oppression (60 percent). The remaining 5 percent is due to “the compulsory applications of the provincial administration.” Altogether, for reasons to be attributed to the war with the PKK or to harsh economic reasons, an estimated four million people left their villages, reducing the number of farmers in the region by 75 percent.<sup>35</sup> It has been a classical civil war, a guerilla movement fighting the central government, a secessionary war, with the objective of acquiring a slice of territory. All was fair in this civil strife: since its outbreak in the 1980s, it has taken a toll of more than 34,000 lives, subjecting Turkey to enormous economic damage and decimating its Kurdish community.

Compromise is out of the question, as it is in any civil war inspired by overriding ideologies. It is Kemalism on the one hand, Kurdish-Marxist nationalism (although the combination may seem contradictory) on the other, and the bloodshed has soared. The two sides have been moving towards a zero-sum solution, i.e. the triumph of one side, the inevitable annihilation of the other. As noted, the Turkish side is led by the army, which lays down an uncompromisingly belligerent strategy. The more Turkey’s political leaders lost face because of their failure to resolve the conflict, the greater became their tendency to leave its resolution to the army. This may spring from a wish to detract attention from their travails by indulging in military operations against a detested domestic foe or, simply, from an awareness of the probable outcome of a showdown between the politicians and the Generals. We have already quoted Philip Robins (see p. 34) about President Demirel, who had endured military interventions in his political career. It is unlikely that any Turkish politician will pick the Kurds as an issue worthy of a showdown with the Turkish General Staff. The true state of affairs – a civil war, with enormous suffering on both sides, which would end only after a protracted and hectic struggle – was well illustrated by the *Turkish Daily News*: “We hear stories every day how the PKK is beaten and crushed. We wish to know what the real story is . . . we hear plenty of empty promises.”<sup>36</sup>

From the mid-1990s, the Turkish army has succeeded in keeping the Kurdish rebellion below “boiling point,” in both civilian and army-controlled areas, including in the “Safe Haven” in northern Iraq. As a result, Turkish army sources could declare: “There are no more gains to be made at the point of a gun . . . Terrorism is at an acceptable level – and now it is up to the politicians to finish the job.” Indeed, Ocalan’s suggestions, every now and then, for a cease-fire, or talks, or a federative solution that would not entail severance from Turkey (the last made in August 1998), testify to a weakening of the PKK underground. And when the internal front had been dealt with, it was easy for the Turkish victor to persuade its neighbors to stop assisting the PKK. Russia, for example, has closed down PKK logistic bases and medical centers in Yaroslav Forest (300 km from Moscow). But the main Turkish gain was on 20 October 1998 when Syria and Turkey signed an anti-terror cooperation document. Following a tough Turkish demand, within which was an explicit threat of Turkish military intervention,

Damascus agreed to stop supporting the PKK, to stop granting shelter to Ocalan, and to cause Lebanon to do the same. Part of the quid pro quo was that Turkey would stop its preventive shelling deep into the Syrian area in the Hatay region, and would remove its ambushes from there, that penetrated deep into the Syrian territory in an effort to hit at PKK bases. The Turkish–Syrian accord forbids any sort of PKK activity in Syria, even commercial activity. Surprisingly – what points to the effects of the Turkish threat – Syria agreed to stop inciting against Turkey’s close contacts with Israel. The rest is well known: Ocalan was expelled from Syria and few months later was caught by the Turks. Turkey’s readiness to enforce a showdown, whatever the price, had an effect.<sup>37</sup>

Turkey has estimated the cost of its war against the PKK, as of April 1998, at 80 billion dollar. The 1998 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) fact book quotes a yearly expense of approximately 7 billion dollars, an amount that contributed to the 99 percent inflation rate for 1998 and a national debt equal to half the government’s revenue. Other sources quote a 15 billion dollar annual spending, that is an incredible 225 billion dollar spend during the fifteen-year struggle with the PKK.<sup>38</sup>

Official Turkish statistics points clearly to an escalation of the war against the PKK, particularly since 1995. There is a definite parallel between Turkish offensives and PKK casualties. According to Turkish army spokesmen, of the 10,663 PKK casualties between 1987 and 1996, 7,116 were killed between 1995 and 1996. During that same two years Turkey lost 1,811 soldiers, whereas during the period 1987–96, total Turkish casualties were 3,400. The number of incidents linked with the PKK has been dropping significantly: 3,993 in 1993; 3,908 in 1994; 2,118 in 1995; 1,941 in 1996; 1,300 in 1997; and 977 in 1998. Altogether, of the 2.5 million troops that served in the force and took part in quelling the PKK uprising during its fifteen years (1984–99), a total of 5,606 soldiers, police and Village Guards were killed, 11,269 were injured, 5,316 civilians died, and an additional 5,903 were injured. During the same period 23,638 PKK members lost their lives.

In preparing their case against Abdullah Ocalan, the Turkish prosecution had furnished the court that eventually sentenced Ocalan to death, with the following statistics, relating to the period of August 1984–February 1999. The PKK staged 6,036 attacks and 8,257 armed clashes with the Turkish security forces. There were also 3,071 bomb attacks, 388 people were robbed at gunpoint and 1,046 people were kidnapped. As a result of these attacks, 4,472 civilians, 3,874 soldiers, 247 policemen and 1,255 Village Guards were killed. A total of 16,362 people were injured.<sup>39</sup>

Turkey’s response to the PKK’s suggestions of a cease-fire has been unequivocal: they will not negotiate with terrorists. Ocalan’s federative proposals only increased Turkish wrath: any compromise, even the smallest, with Kurdish demands, would lead to the unraveling of the entire fabric of Turkish society. However, now that Turkey has satisfied itself that it has crushed the PKK military uprisings, both within Turkey and in the areas it controls in

northern Iraq, the international aspects of the conflict are snowballing. With each progressive decline in the extent of Kurdish terrorism, Turkey absorbs more and more international criticism for its treatment of the Kurds and their political aspirations.

Turkey did well in one and a half of the “two and a half wars” it is supposed to be fighting.<sup>40</sup> As noted, it reduced Kurdish terrorism (“the half war”) to a tolerable level. It reduced the threats emanating from Syria. As for Greece, Turkey was ready, it was claimed, to do battle whenever necessary. Six countries have been accused of aiding and abetting the PKK: first, Syria and Greece, then Armenia, Cyprus, Serbia and Iran. Apart from Iran, the rest practically stopped supporting the military uprising of the Kurds. However, when the war was practically over, it became easier to attack Turkey on the non-military aspects of the Kurdish question. When the PKK ceased its terrorist activity its status in certain places in Europe slowly changed from that of a “terrorist organization” to a “criminal one.”<sup>41</sup> The subject of human rights in Turkey (see Chapter 5) is given broad media coverage due to the number of Kurds seeking political asylum in Western Europe. Tens of thousands of Kurds are fleeing, allegedly from the threats of the Turkish authorities. Between 1988 and 1997, 30,000 refugees sought political asylum in Greece, most were from Turkey, and 70 percent of these Turks claimed to be of Kurdish nationality. Ankara rejected the notion that these people were in need of a shelter, claiming instead that they merely consider Italy and Greece as the closest entrance on their way to the richer members of the EU. It also blamed Greece for accepting “terrorists and fugitives” from Turkey, while deporting immigrants and genuine asylum seekers from countries like Iraq, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.<sup>42</sup>

Turkey has repeatedly protested at what it calls “the exaggeration” of the problem of Kurdish refugees by a number of European countries. It also challenged the double standards it is treated with. The PKK has been militarily weakened, but it has succeeded in stressing the political aspects of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict and gaining Western support for the recognition of its rights – to the detriment of Turkey. Mesut Yilmaz, when serving as Turkey’s Prime Minister, was upset at the way in which Europe had “romanticized” the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, turning terrorists into “freedom fighters struggling for their self-determination.” And now, that Congress in Washington is intermittently placing a condition of the sale of arms to Turkey on the improvement of human rights there, particularly with regard to the Kurds, Turkey has responded bitterly: “And is everything in Saudi Arabia perfect already?”<sup>43</sup> Understandably, expectations from Turkey are different from what is expected of Saudi Arabia.

The Turkish military put it even more forthrightly:

Regarding human rights . . . the Turkish Armed Forces are far ahead of many European nations. Unfortunately, we are facing double standards in human rights. If any member of the general staff of a European country says “we will prepare a human rights plan for the Southeast” [of Turkey, where most Turkish Kurds reside], we as the Turkish General Staff, are ready to undersign such a plan with our eyes closed.

Because we are 100 percent sure that their plan will turn out to be exactly like the one we have in place right now.<sup>44</sup>

When PKK danger to the country's territorial integrity had practically been removed, attention was drawn to the terror acts of the Muslim and ultra-nationalist radicals, the Turkish Hizbullah. The secular integrity of the country was now at risk. The victims of this ugly war – disappearances, the extrajudicial killings, the remains of more than forty mutilated people slaughtered by the Muslim extremists – had been Kurds from the southeastern provinces of the country, as well as Turkish intellectuals and businessmen. The fact that hundreds of Kurds – many identifying themselves with the PKK – were among the victims, raised the suspicion that Turkish Hizbullah had actually acted as an arm of the Turkish military. The PKK–Hizbullah animosity was actually a civil war within a civil war; although the PKK had a declared Marxist ideology, it also used Muslim ideas to attract the conservative Kurdish Muslims of southeastern Turkey. The Kurds, most of them Sunni Muslims, tend to be more pious than the rest of society. Both organizations thus competed over the same people. However, another interpretation attributed this Kurdish–Muslim conflict to a struggle over the control of contraband smuggling.<sup>45</sup>

The capture of Abdullah Ocalan in February 1999 marked a turning point, as the Republic of Turkey, established in 1923, was winning its seventeenth war (or twenty-eighth or twenty-ninth – see p. 37) against the Kurds. A year later, in February 2000, the PKK declared a unilateral, no preconditions, cease-fire. New challenges now face Turkey, in particular in the southeast of the country. The area suffers from a lack of 80,000 jobs, in particular for the pro-government paramilitary troops, the Village Guards. The end of the war with the PKK resulted in the dissolution of the force, i.e. a sharp increase of unemployment in the area. The guards were trying to resume civilian life despite the killing of animal husbandry and other means of employment, but with meager or no support at all from Ankara. This was seen as gross ingratitude because, during the war the Turkish military was helped by 95,000 guards who became the army's first line of defence. (Established in the late 1980s, the Village Guards comprised local villagers who volunteered to serve, mainly for economic reasons, or were forced to do so. Their monthly wages amounted to 115 dollars, a considerable amount in the poverty-stricken southeast.)<sup>46</sup>

The end of the war has caused Turkey intricacies and difficulties perhaps no less intractable than during the war. Metehan Demir of the *Turkish Daily News*, who toured southeastern Turkey in late November 1997, conveyed the gist of this new situation. Leaving the area to the Turkish military alone is a sure recipe for new problems. If the Turkish state will not deal with it, the mosquitoes will return to the swamp:

The Turkish Armed Forces had managed to kill the mosquitoes (terrorists) but the swamp (terrorism) was still there. The military Generals say that the most important

thing is to drain this swamp by earning the support of the public in the region. The Generals based in the region, and the messages sent by the military from Ankara, are urging the government to take immediate economic and social measures as a follow-up to the victory won by the military against the separatist PKK . . . before it is too late. Nowadays, unfortunately, the military is everything in the southeast. It is the post office, doctor, teacher and highway constructor, as well as encouraging people to engage in new business sectors. As a General said: "Now the military is asking the state, 'Where are you?' and is urging it to come to the southeast. But holding Cabinet meetings in the southeast for show is not enough. I'm asking how many government programs have been put into effect."

Putting aside the military and national interests of the PKK, southeast Turkey contains enough social and economic reasons for the re-emergence of radicalism. An average family has 15 children – an "alarming proportion" of the young population need schooling and other facilities which are not available. Also women are regarded as second class citizens, despite attempts by officers' wives to win the confidence and cooperation of these women.<sup>47</sup>

Interestingly, the southeast suffers from the highest rate of suicide attempts among women in Turkey – twice as high as other regions. (More women than men in Turkey attempt suicide – twice as many.) Half of the region's women are illiterate – most families refuse to let the girls attend schools.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps there could not have been a better summation for our Turkish-Kurdish chapter: so much has to be done internally in Turkey, for the underprivileged in particular.

## Notes

- 1 *The Economist*, "Survey Turkey," 8 June 1996.
- 2 *TDN*, 27 July 1999.
- 3 Tozun Bahcheli, "Turkish Foreign Policy toward Greece," in Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayari (eds), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000, p. 146. Formed after the September 1980 military coup, the Council is a ten-person advisory body, chaired by the President of the country and consists of five top military officers and five senior civilian leaders, including the Prime Minister and the secretaries for defense and foreign affairs.
- 4 Philip Robins, "Turkey: The Kurdish Factor. The Overlord State: Turkish Policy and the Kurdish Issue," *International Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 4, October 1993, p. 666.
- 5 *Time*, 15 April 1991; P. Lyman (Director, Bureau for Refugee Programs, US State Dept.), "The Iraqi Refugees Problem," presentation before the US Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Affairs, Washington, DC, 20 May 1991; *Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations*, Annual 6, 1991, pp. 257–259; Zvi Bareil, *Ha'aretz*, 15 July 1994; Yoav Karni, *Ha'aretz Supplement*, 9 August 1991.
- 6 *TDN*, 7 October 1993; *Time*, 6 December 1993; *Ha'aretz*, 17 December 1993; *Kathimerini* (Greek), 14 December 1998; Ismet G. Imset, *The PKK: A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey (1973–1992)*, Ankara, Turkish Daily News Publications, 1992, p. 140.
- 7 *Time*, 6 December 1993; Robins, "Turkey: The Kurdish Factor," pp. 662–663.
- 8 *TDN*, 7 October 1993; *Time*, 6 December 1993; *Ha'aretz*, 17 December 1993.
- 9 Henry J. Barkey, "The Struggle of a 'Strong' State," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Autumn 2000, pp. 87–105, 97.

- 10 TDN, 7 October 1993; 31 May 1999; *Time*, 6 December 1993; Hila Shlomberger *Ha'aretz* (reprinted from *Die Zeit*), 8 March 1991; Abdullah Ocalan, interview, Kurdish satellite MED-TV, London, 13 December 1998, quoted in *Ha'aretz*, 15 December 1998.
- 11 *The Economist*, reprinted in *Ha'aretz*, 9 June 1999; Tamar Gabelnick, William D. Hartung and Jennifer Washburn, *Arming Repression: U.S. Arms Sales to Turkey During the Clinton Administration*, a joint report of the World Policy Institute and the Federation of American Scientists, October 1999, available at [www.fas.org/asmp/library/reports/turkeyrep.htm](http://www.fas.org/asmp/library/reports/turkeyrep.htm)
- 12 Robins, "Turkey: The Kurdish Factor," pp. 658–667.
- 13 *The Economist*, 31 October 1992; *Time*, 15 April 1991; 28 June 1993; *Ha'aretz*, 1 February 1994.
- 14 *Ha'aretz* (reprinted from *Wall Street Journal*), 19 April 1993; Thomas Friedman, *Ha'aretz* (reprinted from *New York Times*), 23 May 1995; William Safire, *New York Times*, 30 March 1995.
- 15 *The Economist*, 31 October 1992.
- 16 Guneri Civagolu, *Milliyet* (Turkish), 3 December 1998.
- 17 Dani Rubenstein, *Ha'aretz*, 3 February 1991; Yoav Karni, *Ha'aretz Supplement*, 9, 16 August 1991. On the conflict between the KDP and the PUK see *Time*, 27 March 1995; William Safire, *New York Times*, 30 March 1995; Orya Shavit, *Ha'aretz*, 2 October 1998; TDN, 31 May 1999.
- 18 Alan Makovsky, "Kurdish Agreement Signals New U.S. Commitment," *Policywatch*, No. 341, 29 September 1998.
- 19 Metin Heper, "The Ottoman Legacy and Turkish Politics," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Autumn 2000, pp. 63–82, 76.
- 20 *The Economist*, "Survey Turkey," 8 June 1996; Robins, "Turkey: The Kurdish Factor," pp. 661–664; TDN, 7 October 1993; *Ha'aretz*, 31 August 1993; Yoav Karni, *Ha'aretz Supplement*, 16 August 1991; Servet Mutlu, "Ethnic Kurds in Turkey: A Demographic Study," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4, November 1996, p. 538, n. 64; TDN, 16 April 1999; TDN, quoting President Demirel, 12 July 1999; *Turkish Probe*, 30 November 1997; 21 February 1999.
- 21 Dogu Ergil, "The Kurdish Question after Ocalan," TDN, 27 February 1999.
- 22 TDN, 27 April 1999.
- 23 Ergil, "The Kurdish Question after Ocalan."
- 24 Metehan Demir, *Turkish Probe*, 30 November 1997.
- 25 Author's interview with air force officers, Ankara, February 1999.
- 26 Andrew Purvis, "Firsthand Experience," *Time*, 29 October 2001.
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# 3

## On culture, economy, and demography Turkey and Europe

Turkey's relations with Europe and the EU have covered a multitude of issues, in particular being heavily involved with economic, political, cultural, ethnic, social, religious, secular and excessive national issues, the democratic process and military interventions in that process, human rights, minority rights, immigration and other aspects. Turkish association with Europe was meant to be the epitome of the country's integration in the Western civilization; membership in the relevant economic and military bodies (NATO, the EU), the chief agents to achieve it. Alas, the road to Europe has been hectic, something that often resembled a roller-coaster ride. Savage and bitter criticisms were exchanged, pleasantries and compliments were reciprocally given, rosy and optimistic hopes for better times were shared. Absolute democracy has been the EU prerequisite; insistence that each nation has a right to its own form of democracy and that Turkish democracy should be seen as the equal of any other has been the Turkish view. In this chapter we analyze the major elements of this complex relationship.<sup>1</sup>

### **Realities, ambivalence, and hopes: Turkey and the EU**

The 1990s started with an explicit wish of the Turkish President to link its country's moves in the Gulf War to a rapprochement with the EU. The Luxembourg decision of December 1997 to reject Turkish accession into the EU rebuffed Turkey's wishes. The Helsinki's decision two years later to offer Turkey a place corroborated it. The 1990s have thus produced a debit and a credit side to Turkey's relations with Europe and the EU.

The Customs Union between Turkey and the EU, which took effect in January 1996, has been a qualitative great leap forward. At the end of the 1990s, 50 percent of Turkey's yearly trade was with the EU, more than 37.5 billion dollar.



In 1998, for instance, Turkey's imports from the EU reached 24.08 billion dollars, its exports 13.5 billion.<sup>2</sup>

But not all remained plain sailing. The December 1997 EU Luxembourg decision to bypass Ankara and to invite eleven applicant countries to negotiate membership was bitterly perceived in Turkey, as if the Europeans were pushing a strategically significant and loyal colleague away from the West. Ankara regarded the resolution as an unjust, unfair, discriminatory step. Implicitly it put on Turkey the entire onus for the Greco-Cypriot-Kurdish and other minorities' conflicts with Turkey. It was for Turkey to accept her contenders' solutions and not the other way round, hence the pushing of Ankara to the end of the queue. Others were preferred to Turkey, including some who are less advanced, including the Cypriot Greeks. Inviting the Republic of Cyprus while not solving first the Island's ethnic-political problems, and simultaneously excluding the Turkish Cypriots from the negotiations was particularly galling for Turkey, a clear expression of just how little regard or respect Europe had for her.

The resolution came at a bad time for the Turkish government. By 1997, a growing number of Turks no longer identified with the West or defined themselves as Europeans, while Muslim organizations and parties were successfully challenging the country's ruling, Westernized, secular elite – itself beset by several leadership crises – in the street and in the polls.<sup>3</sup> Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz defined the Luxembourg decision as an attempt by the EU, Germany in particular, to set up a “New Berlin Wall” in Europe, an effective means to isolate Turkey. It was, Yilmaz thundered, German racism, a desire of creating a “New Lebensraum” on the part of Germany, a pure religious discrimination on behalf of the EU, that was to divide Europe along a line stretching from Christian Bulgaria to Muslim Turkey. German remarks that the Turkish Prime Minister was “running amok,” spewing chauvinist rhetoric, were hardly designed to improve Ankara's temper. Much use has been made for instance, with the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's declaration that Turkey's chances of accession into the EU were slim, because the European boundaries coincided with those of Christendom.

But the tide turned again, and in Turkey's favor, when Greece removed its veto or, as Ankara would have it, “sabotage.” (See Chapter 6.) Also, a new Social Democrat-Greens coalition government favorable to Turkish candidacy emerged in Germany in 1998. The coalition projected a more open stand toward EU enlargement, rejecting narrow geographical interpretations and religious-cultural criteria.<sup>4</sup> Above all, the path seemed easier for a different attitude towards Ankara when the Turkish-PKK war was practically over. By offering Turkey a place the organization does not simultaneously import a violent conflict. The Europeans were also convinced by US lobbying to change policies toward Turkey. A favorable look at Turkey's candidacy would give a boost to the professed EU goal of democratization in that country, argued Washington who added that it would advance “the important role the organization has in promoting values of tolerance and diversity toward the Muslim world.”<sup>5</sup> This all

culminated in Helsinki's invitation to negotiate Turkey's membership. Still, when one realizes what the EU wants Turkey to change before it is admitted, one also understands that Turkish accession is not close. There still remains the issue of granting social and cultural – perhaps even political – rights to the Kurdish minority. Also, more than 20,000 Turkish laws and regulations must first be amended and improved to conform 90,000 pages of EU requirements and guidelines for legal, political, economic and cultural standards. Small wonder that the reaction of Turkey's Foreign Secretary to these demands was an allegation that "The EU behaves towards us like 'colonial governors.'"<sup>6</sup>

The sympathy throughout Europe toward earthquake stricken Turkey in 1999 was wide, even astonishing. The August tremor, measured 7.4 on the Richter scale, was one of the strongest – and longest, at 45 seconds – to hit Europe in recent memory. It shocked Turkey's industrial heartland, southeast of Istanbul, and left 17,000 dead and 30,000 injured. Almost every European country rushed to send Turkey relief aid and the EU Commission allocated monies for humanitarian needs and for building housing for survivors. A two-hour television appeal in Germany raised 7 million dollars, a similar campaign in the Netherlands produced 13 million dollars.<sup>7</sup> The change in the attitude of human rights groups – which in 1997 opposed Turkish accession but in 1999 favored it – apparently showed that EU candidacy was thought to offer the best hope for a reform in Turkey. Indeed in 1999, shortly after winning the April elections, the government of Turkey's Prime Minister, Bulent Ecevit, launched an anti-torture reform campaign.<sup>8</sup> Many Europeans, particularly those on the left who are influential in EU governments, feel goodwill toward Ecevit, who is considered to be "clean" when it comes to corruption issues, and who believes in social democrat ideas. Before he entered parliament as an Ankara deputy and becoming a politician (1959), Ecevit has been a pioneer of labor rights in his country. He has also been an English translator who studied art, history, Bengali and Sanskrit at London University. A man of letters, a writer, an editor in Turkey's dailies, and a poet who arouses sympathy, his works had been translated into German, Russian, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, Danish and Swedish.

Turkey in the 1990s enjoyed the talents and the reputations of two successful leaders – Ozal and Ecevit. (Erbakan's year in office is considered an "accident"; Yimaz's and Ciller's got mixed evaluations). Internally and outside Turkey, the two leaders pursued their country's interests, and in most cases brought fame and success to Turkey. More important, they managed to persuade their constituencies and public opinion, as well as foreign governments and world media, of the justification of Turkey's policies. It is not very often one comes across a decade in which two successful politicians like Ozal and Ecevit lead Turkey.

Even Kurdish organizations softened when the idea of removing the ban on Kurdish-language television and broadcasts was given a boost following the announcement of the December 1999 Helsinki decision. (In August 2002, the Turkish Parliament finally approved these concessions.) The thesis that

advocates cooperation with Turkey – not alienation – as a means of extricating concessions from it, apparently proved itself. Ismail Cem, Turkey's Foreign Secretary, defined the ban as an obstacle to Turkey's EU membership. A bit earlier, in one of Turkey's leading newspaper, in an article entitled "Turkey vs. the West," the writer openly advocated the opening of a Kurdish television channel in Turkey. Who cares if the Kurdish Turks will have their own station? Could this possibly harm anyone, he asked. He even went a step further and offered Kurdish, Arabic, Uzbek, Turkish and Ottoman Turkish as electives in high schools. If an ethnic language television channel abuses its position and preaches armed uprising or insults, the station should be taken to court and fined severely. "If they lost enough money enough times, they would be careful henceforth or they would go broke . . . This is a Western concept, and not necessarily always a good thing, but it works: make them pay money!"<sup>9</sup> Enabling the Kurds in Turkey to live their own culture in line with their traditions and customs has caused the Turkish State Minister Responsible for Human Rights to approve the teaching of the Kurdish language. "But I do not think that there is a need to learn Kurdish math [or] Kurdish biology," he commented.<sup>10</sup>

Kurds are not allowed to use their language in education, but the ban on Kurdish broadcasts is largely ignored. No official legal action has been taken against dozens of newly opened local radio stations broadcasting in Kurdish. But not everyone in Turkey was entirely happy with even these moderate advances in Turkey's Kurdish policies. President Demirel observed that there were several Kurdish dialects. Suppose Turkey allows broadcasts in the Kurdish language, what accent should be used? Could Turkey afford to allow all of them on air? And if the Kurds are allowed to have their radio, should Turkey give the same to the Georgians, to the Arabs? According to the Turkish constitution, schools may teach only the official languages of recognized states. As there is no Kurdish state, Kurdish cannot be taught, concluded the President.<sup>11</sup>

Major hurdles still make Turkey's accession into the EU a long and protracted one. Though the reasons seem to be more cultural and emotional with strong relevance to human rights (see Chapter 5), and not strictly economic, deep gaps still exist in the latter area as well. For instance, EU inflation for the years 1998–2000 has been 1.3–1.7 percent annually. Alas, the Turkish average figure was close to 70 percent, and the crisis of winter 2001 elevated inflation even further. The average increase of EU exports and imports for the same period comes to 7.1–6.7, and 7.0–6.2 percent, respectively. The Turkish average figures amount to *minus* 5.4–*minus* 12.5, and *plus* 2.7–*minus* 3.6.<sup>12</sup> Another disturbing economic gap is Turkey's budget deficit, which has soared to 14 percent, whereas the EU permits its members a shortfall of no more than 3 percent. Hence, the cost of economic adjustment and support programs to bring Turkey closer to EU levels would be prohibitively high. Eighteen years after admitting Greece, the EU still pays assistance to this country. Do we need a second Greece, officials ask in Brussels. Kenneth Moss mentions that some Europeans also fear the strengthening of the "Mediterranean Voice" in EU bodies, and worry lest

Turkey's cheaper cost of labor, when combined with its strong work ethic, would draw jobs out of northern Europe. But, above all, it seems as if the inclusion of a Muslim state, partly Asian – “whether Turkey is really Byzantium in a fancy dress” – is hardest for the Europeans to swallow.<sup>13</sup>

The inclusion of millions of Turkish farmers threatens to break the EU budget. In a typical expression, an EU official commented desperately of the “butter mountains” that will be doubled if Turkey is in the EU, as are the farming subsidies the EU presently grants – 43 billion dollar a year. If the Turks join the 7.13 million EU farmers – 4.3 percent of the EU workforce as against 43 percent in Turkey – and agriculture is expected to double, then subsidies will double as well, or come to astronomical sums if given per person. The fact that, at present, Turkey's agricultural exports to the EU rarely exceed 17 percent (and is mere 5 percent in imports), fails to allay EU anxieties. On the contrary, it convinces the Europeans that trade with Turkey would show a negative balance, for the Turks' purchasing power is one-third the EU average<sup>14</sup>

Similarly threatening is the migration of millions of industrious Turks who would move in to take the jobs of Europeans. There remains the issue of human and minority rights, and the abolition of Article 312 of the Turkish penal code – that practically accuses anyone who dares to criticize the state with violating the law against preaching hatred. Disputed aspects of Turkish democracy also mar relations, for instance, the issue of political freedoms, the role of the military in politics, etc. “It's a bit tricky counting on Turkey's top brass: they feel committed to defend their country's democracy – as they perceive it – secularism and westernization. That is why they rush to intervene in domestic politics whenever they smell that the three or each of them are under assault” – is a typical NATO attempt to understand the Turkish internal realities.<sup>15</sup>

We have already mentioned that more than 20,000 Turkish laws and regulations must be amended and improved to conform to EU requirements. True, Ankara tries hard and does strive to change its laws. Among the 502 new articles of the new penal code, one finds the abolition of the death penalty, the elevation of the minimal age eligible for prison punishment to twelve years old, preaching hatred and separation was redefined, its scope greatly limited, etc. Still, the Turkish parliament is known for its dilatory methods when controversial new laws are debated. The proposed new penal code might therefore experience changes that will practically emasculate the above amendments.

The EU also takes a negative position vis-à-vis Turkey's periodic forays into northern Iraq in its war against PKK, and as a result the EU is holding up the dispatch of military supplies. In Germany, for instance, the dispatch of bridge-building equipment was frozen, so was a grant of 150 million DM for the construction in Germany of two destroyers for the Turkish navy. Norway recalled military supplies already on their way to Turkey.

These hurdles notwithstanding, Prime Minister Ecevit saw no hindrance to Turkey being ready in less than four years for full membership, i.e. by 2004. Cem, the Foreign Secretary, more cautious and realistic, expected it to happen

in fifteen years' time.<sup>16</sup> However, skepticism prevails in Turkey. Turks were not overjoyed when hearing about Helsinki but have remained fundamentally unconvinced of the Europeans' willingness to accept them as one of their own. The embrace, they said, could be capricious and short-lived. It was mentioned that Helsinki is hardly the first time the Europeans have recognized Turkey's Europeanness. In 1856, the Ottoman Empire was invited to join the Concert of Europe. More than a century later, following the signing of the Association Agreement between the European Economic Community and Turkey (1964), Turkey was solemnly declared as being part of Europe. Such flattering remarks have been uttered many times during the past 200 years, mentions Dov Waxman, yet Turkey's European identity has never been settled. On the contrary: Ankara is often reminded that its human rights record, its military's interventions in politics, its rampant, unruly, and unchecked corruption, its poor market economy, and its conflicts with the Hellenic world do not leave much room for hope regarding Turkey's possible accession into the EU.<sup>17</sup>

### **Turkish immigrants in Germany**

Next to Greece, Germany has been the strongest opponent of Turkish membership in the EU, allegedly because it fears the inundation of the country with more Turkish immigrants, in addition to the 2.8 million already there – the largest migrant group in Germany. More than 1 million Turkish workers are employed in EU countries, of which 700,000 reside in Germany. Germany has some 8 million foreigners – just under 10 percent of the population. “Ethnic Germans” from the former Soviet Union – who, incidentally, speak no German – raise the ratio to 13 percent. Although Germany stopped accepting foreign workers after the 1973 energy crisis and the ensuing increases in oil prices, it still absorbs, annually, 100,000 “Ethnic Germans,” 60,000 relatives of foreigners already residing in the country, and 100,000 refugees. Refugees and asylum seekers in Germany – the country has long been a prime destination for asylum seekers – amount to 1.7 million. Between 1990 and 2001, almost 2.05 million people applied for asylum in the country – about 41 percent of the overall number of applicants in Western Europe. Ten percent were eventually granted shelter.<sup>18</sup> Half a million of the 2.8 million Turks living in Germany are of Kurdish origin. A Turkish–Kurdish conflict is, thus, very viable in Germany. Turks are the largest group among the 3.2 million Muslims residing in Germany. For comparison, there are more than 5 million Muslims in France, 2 million in Great Britain, and one million in Italy – altogether there are 12 million Muslims in the EU. Islam, as a result, has become the second largest religion in Europe. It has a strong Turkish character in Germany, a more Indian–Pakistani character in England, and a more Magrebian character in France, where close to 2 million Moroccans and Algerians live.<sup>19</sup> Following the civil war in Yugoslavia, some 1.4 million immigrants have migrated to EU countries, the majority to Germany, where 280,000

Muslim immigrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina look for help and shelter. Berlin is, or is close to being, the third largest Turkish city in the world, after Istanbul and Ankara. In addition, the 51,000 Turkish entrepreneurs comprise the largest group (18.3 percent) among foreign entrepreneurs in Germany, whose number at the end of the 1990s reached 279,000. There are also 23,000 Turkish university students and 48,000 vocational training (apprentices) students.<sup>20</sup>

German citizenship has been granted only to a fraction of the Turkish immigrants – 160,000. The main argument against a dual Turkish–German citizenship is that holding two passports produces “half a citizen” of a doubtful loyalty. However, a change – some say a revolution because hitherto citizenship was granted according to that of the parents, not place of birth – took place in 1999 in the German naturalization law. From now on it enables the granting of a German passport to children of immigrants born in Germany, living and integrating continuously there for fifteen years, i.e. citizenship according to the Land Law, or *Jus Soli*, not blood affinity of the parents. These children would be able to keep their parents’ nationality, but would have to choose one at the age of twenty-three. Only in rare hardship cases will adults be allowed to hold two passports.

In general, Germans associate the word “Islam” with Turks who, owing to their numbers, are more visible than other Muslims. Islam and immigrants from Muslim countries – Turkey inclusive – are almost automatically associated by many Europeans with memories of wars with the Ottoman Empire, but also with religious fundamentalism and extreme political ideologies. The fact that many immigrants come from ex-European imperial colonies adds to the uneasiness that exists in the meeting of former masters and former natives. A perceptive summation was given lately by Roger Cohen of the *New York Times*: the ghost that hovers now above Europe is not anymore communism but the foreigner and his or her otherness. Similarly, Professor Faruk Sen, director of the Turkish Research Institute in Essen, Germany, asserts that Muslim immigration to Europe, or Islam in Germany, are perceived today by the majority of Germans as a hindrance to integration, as a menace, as a symbol of alienation, and as something which threatens to dilute their “Europeaness.” The consequent demand that the immigrant should adopt German (or European) culture and drop the ethnic or national microcosm he or she has established in the receiving countries, is a sure recipe for a conflict. Immigrants to Europe nowadays mean a problem, not a potential, not a possible positive contribution, not a solution to the growing European demand for more people.<sup>21</sup>

Introversion and extremism are therefore the results. The exclusion and discriminatory steps taken by the European majority, are reinforced by inward moves and isolation – even ghettoization – taken by the migrant minority. The gap is accentuated and widened in particular for the young ones. In Germany half the Turks are below the age of thirty. They have lost any affiliation with their parents’ countries of origin but find no welcoming attitude in their places of residence, although 61 percent of the Turks living in Germany were born there

or have resided there for more than twenty years. When Turkey and Germany are excluded, Islam remains the option of identity of these young Turks:<sup>22</sup>

Most third generation Turks in Germany do not have a sufficient knowledge of German even though most of them have been born and raised there. Outside work or school they have little reason to speak German. They tend to live in urban enclaves with extensive Turkish networks of shops, restaurants, mosques and professional services. They can even watch Turkish TV . . . available via cable or satellite . . . For many young Turks, inability to communicate effectively in the language of their adopted country is a real handicap. It often means poor scholastic achievement and inferior education. In 1998, only 14 percent of Turkish secondary school students qualified for university admission, compared to more than 30 percent of their German counterparts . . . With unskilled jobs becoming ever scarcer, unemployment among those untrained Turkish youths is more than twice the national [Germany's] average of 9.6 percent. This leads to growing frustration among the youngsters and makes them more susceptible to political and religious extremism . . . [In such circumstances] fundamentalist Islamic organizations and nationalist Turkish associations [thrive].<sup>23</sup>

No wonder, concluded *The Economist*, that the chances of these migrant young Muslims and Turks being unemployed, suffering from poor education, and being molested and abused by the local police, are much higher than those of the same indigenous, non-migrant group age.<sup>24</sup>

The difficulties linked to the reunification of the two German states, and the increase in unemployment – 17 percent without jobs in what was before East Germany, 3.7 million unemployed people in the entire country – produce strong xenophobic emotions, racism, vicious and brutal attacks against foreigners residing in Germany. There were 16,000 cases of racist incidents in Germany in the year 2000 – 1,000 of them violent – a dramatic increase of 59 percent by comparison with 1999. Turks, not surprisingly, were made particular scapegoats for the social turbulence in Germany.<sup>25</sup>

Some scholars speak of two Turkish communities in Germany: the integrated minority, and the community enclosed within its own world. Only the minority among the Turks in Germany communicates in German, in fact even the third generation faces difficulties in freely speaking the language. The rest – the majority – speaks only Turkish, eats Turkish food, listens to Turkish music, and watches Turkish television. They actually “live at the borderline with Germans and not in an integrated way.” In short, they have created their own isolated worlds within German towns, trying *not* to integrate with the German society. More than a little uneasy, Germans have compared their Turkish community unfavorably to the Haitians, who emigrated to the United States and made every effort to raise their children as Americans in order to ensure their future.<sup>26</sup>

These migrant workers, Turks included, demand of their hosts services that are equal but segregated, their culture forbidding believers to mingle with infidels. They have no desire to assimilate, nor do they wish to adopt the social and political models of Europe's secular society. “They are subjects of Allah, not the

state.” Extremist voices among them even argue that “You are more Muslim when you are against the West.” No wonder the European majority blames them for rejecting freedom of speech and full democracy. Furthermore, what Europeans perceive as repression of women in the migrants’ Muslim society, and issues of forced arranged marriages, abortion and sexuality, often leads to conflict with the institutions of the host country. Preservation of family honor through the murder of women is not a matter the host country can delegate to internal family jurisdiction. The civil wars in the Balkans are also perceived as interfaith conflicts, injecting the specter of religious war into the already sullied atmosphere. Even if Europeans do not wish to show indifference to the massacre of Chechens or Bosnians or the people of Kosovo in the former Yugoslavia, the relatives of the victims, along with the Muslim states, complain that because the victims were Muslim Europe did nothing to save them.<sup>27</sup>

Cultural disdain for Turks is part of European fear of a Muslim influx that would alter the character of Europe’s population. The migrants reaching Europe from North Africa and Indonesia, the Indian subcontinent and Turkey, are all Muslims. As already noted, more than 3 million Turks reside in EU countries. In Britain and France, Muslims constitute over 10 percent of the population. At the end of the twentieth century, some 20 million Europeans identified themselves as Muslims. Continued immigration, negative population growth in some West European countries, and a high rate of natural increase among the migrants, fan European fears that within a generation the ratio of Muslims in the population of Western Europe will reach 25 percent. The migrants’ inclination to stay aloof, and the local population’s reluctance to enter into anything but the most essential contacts with them, combine to create a separate Muslim culture in Western Europe. Convinced that their culture is superior to that of their infidel host countries, the migrants do everything possible to preserve their customs and heritage. Alternatively, they have grave reservations about European calls for them to assimilate themselves in the cultures of the host countries. Experiencing violent racist reactions, Muslim migrants to Germany quote the fate of German Jews whose integration did not spare them extermination. “Next time there are gas chambers in Europe they will be for Muslims.”<sup>28</sup>

Islam in Germany – as associated with Turks, above – has become even more “visible,” through the increase in the proportion of women among migrants because the religious affiliation of women is clearly and publicly manifested in their attire, particularly in their veils. A survey in *Le Monde*, for example, revealed that an ever growing number of Muslim women in Britain had adopted the *hijab*, the traditional Islamic head covering. Germany is no different. During the years many Turkish families followed their men and migrated to Germany. This family reunification confronted the German society – or other European receiving state – with the cultural and social consequences of migration that had thus far been neglected: schools, kindergartens, proper housing, health services and clinics, intra-family abuse, etc. No wonder legal restrictions and economic incentives – like direct payments for those who return to their countries of origin, as well as



assistance in establishing new businesses there – were imposed and offered by the German authorities. The aim in Germany was decreasing the number of Turks residing there and limiting the number of those who would be potential candidates for naturalization and for German citizenship.<sup>29</sup>

The EU attracts immigrants, many of whom are Turks, many of whom come to Germany. More than 1.2 million immigrants came to Germany in 1992 – Turkish job seekers, ethnic Germans, refugees of the Yugoslav upheavals and of the collapse of communism in east Europe. In 1997 the number was down to 615,000. The explanation for this attraction is that side by side with its economic prosperity, the EU population, Germany's included, is becoming older. By 2025 the percentage of those above the age of sixty-five will be 22.4 percent – compared with 15.4 percent in the year 2000 – and the number of children born to EU women is declining. On average, when a woman gives birth to an average 2.1 children the number of people in a given place remains stable. However, in EU countries women give birth to an average 1.45 children, with German women even fewer – 1.3. Natural population growth in the entire EU (in 1999) was 270,000, which is less than one-thousandth of the 380 millions who live in EU countries. Legal immigration for the same period – there must have been many more illegal immigrants – amounted to 711,000, almost three times the EU natural growth.<sup>30</sup> Young foreigners in growing numbers are the work force who fills the gaps, replacing the aging Europeans and those who look for “clean” jobs only, and allocate from their wages the monies needed to sustain the growing numbers of retired people.

Half of Germany's population, which will *decrease* and number 66 million in 2050 (82 million in 2000), will be over sixty years old. Already one in six Germans – 17 percent – is above the age of sixty-five, and children comprise less than a quarter of the population. What is happening in Germany applies to the rest of the EU. There are many European countries among the twenty countries worldwide with the lowest birth rate. “In 17 European countries there are more burials than birthday parties, more coffins are being built than cradles.”<sup>31</sup> The rapid urbanization that the continent has experienced since the Second World War is one of the explanations for the shrinking numbers in EU countries. The size of urban accommodation is less than in rural areas, hence less space is left for children. Women need to look for jobs outside the home to help sustain their families. The family and the church are a diminishing influence. Abortions and family planning are available. There is increasing use of contraceptives, an increase in the number of one-parent families and a growing demand for higher educated women – women who develop their own careers and thus delay parenting. It is said of Italy that by the year 2010 it will be the “first culture in history” in which the number of people of sixty years old or more will be higher than the age group for birth to eighteen and, more apocalyptically, if perhaps fancifully, “900 years from now and there will be no more Italians.”<sup>32</sup>

The situation in Germany is not much better. The country is aging, average life expectancy is seventy-six years, but the number of the working, active

people, whose tax payments sustain the country's welfare system is rapidly diminishing. Already the major share of the national budget – 36 percent – goes to the Ministry for Welfare and National Insurance. Within a generation the German pension system will hardly be able to cope with the growing class of retirees whose share in the population will increase from 22 to 40 percent. Currently, for every four workers who are active in Germany, one is retired and enjoys the pension system. Before long, with the growing number of pensioners, that ratio will be down to just two:one. The country, thus, is in a great need of immigrant workers. Eventually it will have to absorb them as citizens, and will benefit from their work and tax payments.

Immigrants to Germany are young – which is understandable – but they might constitute a demographic and cultural threat. Twenty percent of the foreigners residing in Germany are between the ages of birth and twenty-four; for Germans the equivalent figure is 13 percent. Fifty-one percent of foreigners are in the age group of twenty-five to fifty-four, which is the main workforce; for Germans it is 41 percent. The picture reverses in the age group of fifty-five to sixty-five, and older: here there are many more Germans – 16.5 percent – but only 4.5 percent foreigners. German politicians try hard by offering German women more money – 484 dollar a month – to increase births and to raise the fertility rate to 2.2 children per woman.

Between the years 2000 and 2050 Germany will have to import 487,000–600,000 foreign workers *annually* to keep its workforce stable, France 109,000, and the entire EU – 1.6 million. Without immigration, Germany's working-age population will drop from 41 million now to a mere 27.3 million in 2050. To sustain the mid-twenty-first century pension levels in EU countries, the working and taxpayer groups among the number of Europeans will have to increase by another 75 million. Many of them will be immigrants. Yet, as migration expert Han Entzinger concludes, although “markets need migrants, the people don't want them”<sup>33</sup>

It will not be a wild guess to assume that there will be many Turks among the foreign workers who seek jobs in the EU. Similarly, one can assume that racism will increase, among other reasons, because of allegations that Turks hold jobs of unemployed Europeans (10–11 percent EU average), that foreigners abuse the European welfare system, etc. All this brings to the fore the fears among Germans from growing Turkish immigration. It also sharpens, particularly German, sensitive issues related to citizenship, kinship, blood-affinity, ethnicity, etc.

### **Turkey–EU: hectic negotiations**

Turkey's Gulf War profit–loss balance will not be complete without taking into account the post-war relations between Ankara and the EU. President Ozal's support for the anti-Iraqi coalition stemmed, *inter alia*, from an eagerness to gain the sympathy of the EU, perhaps boosting Turkey's chances of admission to it. In

March 1995 Turkey reached agreement with the EU on a customs union, coming into effect on 1 January 1996 – the highest affiliation stage short of membership. Tansu Ciller, Prime Minister at the time, regarded the agreement as virtual membership in the organization, perceiving its outcome as irrevocably rooting Turkey in the West.<sup>34</sup> In December 1999 Turkey was invited by the EU Helsinki meeting to negotiate its accession into the organization. It is almost forty years since Turkey concluded its first agreement with the European Community, when it signed (1963) an association agreement. In 1987 Ankara submitted a request to become a member of the EU. But accession is not a foregone conclusion: the hurdles are many, and the changes that are demanded of Turkey are tough. The agreement reached in March 1995 is in practice Turkey's highest achievement, and will probably remain so for many years to come.

The customs union was a significant step forward in Turkey's relations with the EU. The initial results were a 5 billion dollar increase in Turkey's trade deficit with the EU, bringing the total deficit to 10 billion dollars. (Usually, Ankara attributes these deficits to Greek blockage, or "sabotage," of EU funds due to Turkey to improve its competitiveness). Yet the wave of bankruptcies predicted by many never came to pass. The EU did foresee Turkish difficulties and established the "Customs Union Package," a financial aid to Turkey of 375 million ecus for the years 1996–99, plus access to other EU funds, all totaling 2.5 billion dollars. The money was supposed to help the Turkish economy by tackling the implications of the customs union. Accordingly, some 7,000 Turkish businesses, which owing to removal of customs faced cheaper EU products, were assisted by the package. Monies were also granted for the adoption of effective and cheaper production techniques, or for a total shift aiming at the production of entirely new goods.<sup>35</sup>

Turkey's policy during the Gulf War may have helped the Europeans to overcome various inhibitions and objections, and to sign the customs agreement. A Greek veto, it should be recalled, was removed by the EU promise to start admission negotiations with the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey is also perceived as an island of relative stability in the heart of regional ferment, extending from the Balkans to Central Asia. But opposition to Turkey continues. Accepting new members, in addition to the fifteen countries that currently compose the EU, raises questions as to the character of this organization. Some favor a larger body, even of twenty-seven members, a move that will prevent the further deepening of the current federal frame and will help preserve the unique features of each member. Others favor a smaller body but with greater unity. No doubt Turkey has better chances with the first school of thought. Still, the grounds for rejecting Turkey relate more to features found in it and less to the wider discussion about the future of the EU.

Inflation, denial of human rights, repression of the Kurds, the lack of social security mechanisms, and the large size of the country's agricultural sector – these are the common arguments to exclude Turkey. In the 1980s the EU maintained that the gap between its poorest member – at that time Portugal – and

Turkey is still significant: Turkey's GNP was then only one-third that of Portugal. Greece, not Portugal, is nowadays at the bottom of the EU ladder. Still the gap is clear when the 1999 figures are surveyed: 11,739 dollars GDP per capita in Greece, 3,159 dollars in Turkey.<sup>36</sup> Thus, Turks are constantly reminded that their per capita annual income is well below the EU average, and much less than the organization's poorest. When 43 percent of Turkey's population are peasants, an agriculture nightmare to the EU as well as a cultural gap, because "peasants make for tough cops," then rejecting Turkey is a double-edged sword. It is cashing in on human rights issues and raising objections on economic grounds.

The size of Turkey's population and its deviation from the conventions prevalent in the EU, alarm the organization. Should Turkey join, it would soon be the EU's most populous member, with all that that means as regards representation in the European Parliament and in the Council of Ministers. Population predictions pertaining to Turkey are of 70 million by the year 2020, and between 95 million and 98 million by the mid-twenty-first century. By then Germany's population, now 82 million and the EU's largest member, will number 66 million. Thirty-one percent of Turks are under fifteen, as against 19 percent for Europe. Just 6 percent are older than sixty-four, as against 14 percent and climbing in Europe. Similarly, Turkey's area of 300,870 square miles is larger than that of any EU country. Turkish numbers, thus, look threatening, and the EU faces a worrisome situation – a view expressed by a German official but prevalent among other members as well. Should Turkey join, it will be the largest recipient of EU subsidies for members with lower per capita income, the largest number of votes will go to the EU poorest member, to the country which geographically is on the margin of Europe, and to the one that was not among the founders of the EU and has no history of integration in Europe.<sup>37</sup> The rejection of Turkey, whether on economic, social or cultural grounds, is thus near to total. Some of the EU countries mention that they spent centuries trying to force the Turks and their ilk out of Europe. Are they to be allowed back in?<sup>38</sup>

In general, a population growth of 2 percent means the doubling of population every thirty-six years, hence another piece of worrying evidence for the Europeans. Peace and modern medicine have caused the Turkish population to increase fivefold in the past seventy-five years, from 12 million to more than 65 million today (56 million in 1990). Half of Turkey's population is under the age of thirty. Life expectancy that was not much above forty years in the 1930s has increased to seventy-three on average today. The 1940 annual population growth surpassed 5 percent, which then placed Turkey near the top of world demographic lists. It was only after 1980 that the population growth was showing smaller numbers. Family planning and birth control were introduced and abortions were made legal. The process of urbanization has turned out to be a major cause – urban women give birth to fewer children. The population of urban areas reached 56.3 percent by the end of 1990 and 66 percent in the year 2000 – even 71 percent according to another account – compared with only 16.4 percent in 1927. Turkish women looking for jobs outside the home inevitably

pushed for smaller families. All these factors helped curb Turkey's population growth. The country should be complemented for its current population growth – 1.67 percent; thirty years ago it peaked at 2.8 percent. Hopes were expressed (by President Demirel, for instance) that it should be further scaled down to 1.0–1.5 percent. Also, the average number of children born per woman has shrunk from about 7.0 in the early 1930s to 2.7 in 1993. Thus, readiness to curb excessive national growth, even to de-legitimize it, does exist in Turkey. “A population that increases by more than a million each year can't handle the new crowd. Even if the country's [economic] growth rate is more than 5 percent, [then] finding jobs, providing education, and many other services can't be sufficient,” is but one example.<sup>39</sup>

Turkish workers currently resident in Europe, mostly rural, traditionally characterized Anatolian Muslim peasants, are commonly depicted as resisting integration into their host countries, thus preserving and bringing Anatolia into the heart of Europe. As already mentioned, hostility to otherness focuses on the Turks, who are among Europe's largest groups of migrant workers – more than 3 million in EU countries, comprising 24 percent of all migrants workers.

Europeans also fear that religious and cultural divisions “will entail dilution of our European character.” European disdain, disagreements and criticism vis-à-vis the Muslim immigrants, revolve now around issues like the need to separate between state and church, family and women rights, etc. Turkish immigrant girls attending European schools while wearing headscarf, or their participation in coeducational sports and class outings, have become bones of contention. In France, for instance, schoolgirls have been expelled for wearing the *hijab*. Surprisingly, in Austria the Turkish schoolgirls prefer the Austrian education system: they are allowed to cover their heads, whereas in Turkey this is forbidden by law. (For the headscarf controversy in Turkey, see Chapter 4.) Other disagreements and conflicts relate to the state demand that religious classes at school should be given in German, to the religious services extended to Turkish migrants resident in Western Europe, and so on. The five time a day practice of praying which is seen as a disturbance at the workplace, and the religious slaughtering of animals for the supply of meat that contradicts the laws against cruelty to animals, all serve to further exacerbate existing conflicts. So does Ankara's dispatch of Muslim clergymen to the Turkish diaspora in Europe, the height of mosques' minarets in comparison to church towers – in Germany alone there are 1,500 mosques, only a few have a minaret – and the call for prayers which allegedly disturbs the neighbors. Muslim burial practices in Germany continue to bother the authorities. The Germans would like to restore to themselves for development purposes urban areas that were allocated in the past to cemeteries for Muslim immigrants. However, Muslim law which forbids disturbing burials, is thus contrary to German law which limits “standard burial” to a period of fifteen years.

It seems that unlike that of their Christian neighbors, the religious faith of Europe's Muslims is getting stronger, that of the Turks in Germany included.

People from Muslim backgrounds are praying more, attending mosques more often, and observing the Ramadan fast more assiduously than they did before when they arrived in Europe or even in their home countries. Living in a foreign world could be the explanation that creates proximity around Islam but accentuates the difference with the secular majority or with the Christian neighborhood. But *Time's* Nicholas Le Quesne also found that living in Europe gives the Muslim migrants the confidence to practice their religion more openly, relying on the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and the freedoms of expression and association. Unlike their parents or grandparents who thought their sojourn in Europe was temporary and so were content to express their faith in private, their children see Europe as their home and see no reason not to worship more publicly.<sup>40</sup>

As mentioned above, Europeans are disturbed by the Turkish–Kurdish conflict. There can be no doubt that hair-raising testimonies regarding repression of the Kurds – authentic or fabricated – weaken Turkey's advocates. Yasar Kemal, a left-wing writer, the most widely read author in Turkey (*Memed My Hawk, Legend Ararat, Song of a Thousand Bulls, and Annotation Trilogy*), and a fierce critic of Ankara's policies towards the Kurds, accused the authorities of forcing Kurdish prisoners to eat human faeces. His charges shocked the European Council, which used the harshest of terms to express its acute disgust, and ordered Turkey to pay 500,000 French francs in compensation to its Kurdish victims. Similarly, the European Court of Human Rights condemned and fined Turkey (November 1997) and ordered her to pay compensation, for arbitrarily detaining six former Kurdish members of parliament (MP) in 1994. The MPs were held in police custody accused of separatism and undermining Turkish territorial integrity. The Strasbourg-based court defined the detention a breach of Ankara's commitments to respecting the judicial control of detention under the European Rights Convention, saying authorities could not have a free hand to hold suspects even in terrorism investigations. It added that Turkey could not justify the arrests with the state of emergency prevailing in the country's south-east, because the MPs were arrested for what they said in Ankara.<sup>41</sup> Birsan Isenderoglu, in the *Turkish Daily News*, advised Ankara to pursue a different line:

The government spends a lot of its energy reacting to happenings that it envisions as threatening to its image. For example, the Turkish image was not damaged by Yasar Kemal's anti-Turkish article, which was probably read by only a few leftists and communists, until the Turkish government decided to prosecute him. It was then that the story made the headlines in the international press. Turkey neatly fell into the trap. This kind of government reaction strengthens the position of the West and gives it the initiative. It is also a waste of national energy to be overly anxious about what the West thinks.<sup>42</sup>

It is clear that the EU is not anxious to open up its ranks to a violent ethnic struggle of unforeseeable consequences. The Turkish–Kurdish struggle, which

has been exported to European capitals by the Kurds as a way of drawing world attention to their plight, further reinforces European reluctance to forge new links with the Turks. Conversely, the Helsinki decision to negotiate Turkey's accession came only after the Turkish-PKK war was practically over. It should be noted that many of the Turkish migrant workers in Western Europe are Kurds who make strenuous efforts to ensure that their cause is not struck off the European agenda. Loud Kurdish protests brought about the resignation of Gerhardt Stoltenberg, Germany's Defense Minister (March 1993) when it emerged that, in defiance of a ban by the German parliament, fifteen Leopard tanks had been shipped to the Turkish army, and may have served in repressing Kurds.

Turkey is making efforts to refurbish its cultural and political image in European eyes. The country's image in Europe is not flattering: the films *Midnight Express* and *Lawrence of Arabia*, and Turkey's role – real, fictitious, or carried to excess – in the massacres of Armenians, Kurds and Greeks, and Cypriots in twentieth century, further exacerbate hostility. On occasion, Turkey formulated its foreign policy with one eye on Europe. During the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, between Muslim Azerbaijan and Christian Armenia (see Chapter 4), Turkey remained on the sidelines, offering the beleaguered Azeris little more than token support. Suleiman Demirel, Turkey's President, defended the decision, by explaining that to intervene in the dispute would reawaken the age-old Muslim-Christian conflict, with Muslim Turkey cast as the villain of the piece. "All our contacts with Europe would be disrupted," he claimed.<sup>43</sup>

Efforts have been made to improve Turkey's freedom of expression and association. The media has been reformed – some of the alterations in accordance with the standards of Western democracies – by abrogating the monopoly of state radio and television. In place of one public television channel there are now sixteen, with 300 local stations. The ban on the private use of the Kurdish language was abrogated early in 1991. In theory, Marxists no longer suffer persecution and workers have been given the right to organize. True, the last two reforms were ignored in remote places or in the southeast of the country. Still, in the major urban centers changes do take place. In the spring of 1992, Turkey invited a delegation from the Council of Europe Judicial Committee to tour the Kurdish areas of Anatolia. In April that year, Turkey proclaimed a number of reforms relating to the rights of people detained by the police. Their rights are read to them at the time of arrest. Bureaucratic procedures in criminal trials have been speeded up. There is now a maximum period of two years' detention before trial and a strict ban on torture during interrogations. Accused persons are entitled to legal defense from the beginning of the interrogation phase and evidence elicited by violence or threats is inadmissible in court. Recently Turkey has re-examined its anti-terrorism law, particularly clause 8, which forbids expressing support for separatist or subversive activity. If clause 8 is one day cancelled, it will enable the Kurds to openly proclaim their views – a possibility that has drawn vigorous protests from the Turkish General Staff and right-wing parties.

It is generally felt that Europe's vilification of Turkey strengthens the Muslim and nationalist elements in the country and reinforces the position that it is unwise for Turkey to look to the West for its future. The sharp rise of the Muslim Welfare party in the December 1995 elections – the party was dissolved by the courts in 1997 but substituted by the Party of Virtue, also to be outlawed by the judicial system in June 2001 (see Chapter 4) – was commonly ascribed to the hostility revealed by the West, Europe in particular, towards the government of Tansu Ciller. Similarly, the surprising rise of Devlet Bahçeli's Nationalist Action Party (MHP) in the elections of April 1999 was also attributed to the patriotic feelings many Turks had felt following the crackdown on the PKK and the capture of its leader Abdullah Öcalan.<sup>44</sup>

As earlier pointed out, much of Europe's criticism of Turkey centers on the question of human rights and military interventions in political and democratic processes. Henry Barkey mentions that the very existence of the powerful National Security Council, through which the military exerts its influence over the Turkish politics, is perceived by the EU as a violation of its norms.<sup>45</sup> Another issue that has intermittently risen in the 1990s – epitomized in the resolution of the French National Assembly of May 1998 – is the criticism on Ankara for its refusal to take responsibility for the massacre of the Armenians during the First World War. The subject deeply mars Turkey's relations with other countries. It brings about bitter allegations about European, American and Western hidden aims at the territorial integrity of the country. The Sevres syndrome is repeatedly confirmed whenever the Armenian or Kurdish issues arise.

The Turkish reaction against the French National Assembly's move was harsh. Ankara alleged that the French deputies acted to placate their constituencies – France has one of the largest Armenian communities in Europe, about 300,000 strong, most are descendents of First World War survivors. It blamed the French government for showing indifference and passivity towards the anti-Turkish moves in the Assembly, and the deputies for relying on distorted information. Ankara warned that the decision put Turkish diplomats in peril – the Turkish diplomatic community has suffered thirty-one deaths at the hands of Armenian terrorists since the 1970s. "When we look back on our history there can be certain events that we will not endorse utterly, but today's issue is based on wrong information and is being exaggerated," protested Foreign Minister İsmail Cem. Many in Turkey unequivocally argue that the wrongdoings of the Ottoman Empire have nothing to do with today's Republican Turkey. Further more: "France would also have to explain past conduct in its colonies as well as the atrocities committed more recently by the French Army in Algeria, before saddling modern Turkey with the shame imposed by this bill . . . Turks did not commit this horrible crime they are accused of."<sup>46</sup>

As it sees itself receding from hopes for membership in the EU, Turkey has turned to alternatives: relations with Russia, the Ukraine, Israel and the increase of trade with the United States. With the latter Turkey has reached a 6.5 billion dollar trade volume (2001). It has acquired forty-nine American-made Boeing



737–800 commercial passenger planes (at a cost of 2.5 billion dollars), thus turning its back on the European alternative – the Airbus. It has also called off a 145 million dollar purchase of Eryx anti-tank missiles with France. Turkey concluded a gas deal with Russia (13.5 billion dollars), and plans the further development of its economy based on Russian-supplied energy. However, the ambivalence prevails: among the Mediterranean countries Turkey is the largest commercial partner of the EU. In 1995, for instance, Turkey imported 13.4 billion ecus worth of goods from the EU – an increase of 44.7 percent compared with 1994 – and exported to the EU 9.24 billion ecus worth – an increase of 17 percent compared with 1994.<sup>47</sup>

Some argue that Turgut Ozal overreached himself. He loved to repeat to his audience that just as Turkey's participation in the Korean War gained it admission into NATO, its policy in the Gulf crisis would earn its accession into the EU. He was wrong. Furthermore, the customs union signed with Ankara is not a membership; it is questionable whether one will eventually lead to the other. But to the frustration of Turkey – even bitter allegations pertaining to double and discriminatory standards – there were candidate states that were spared the customs union stage and elevated directly towards full membership. A few others did move rather quickly from one stage to the next.<sup>48</sup> Atila Eralp's summation is an accurate description of the conflicting views: "While the EU viewed the customs union as a mechanism to improve its relationship with Turkey without linking it to the issue of full membership, the Turkish side viewed customs union as part of a tacit comprehensive package that would eventually lead to full membership."<sup>49</sup>

Helsinki has not changed the feelings in Turkey that Europe does not want to see the Turks in the EU. This emphasizes emotions that the "world is against us," and repeatedly feeds bitter accusations of the application of double standards where Turkey is concerned. The most recent occurrence is the inclusion, in 2002, of the PKK on the EU list of terror groups. The Spanish ETA and the Irish IRA were long ago on the list; so why did the EU wait eighteen years, since 1984, when the PKK had started terror, complained the *Hurriyet*? It further alleged that though the PKK is on the list, yet if a PKK member asked for a political asylum, say in Germany, this would be granted. This, because Europe differentiates between the organization, which is a terrorist group, and its members, who are entitled to protection. Would the same happen with an ETA or an IRA member, asks the *Hurriyet*?<sup>50</sup>

All this pushes Turkey further away from Europe, towards introversion and inwardness, if not national and religious radicalism. Other options that harbor danger to Turkey's Westernization and declared secularism, are the resumption of too close contacts with the Central Asian republics, or with the sixty or so countries-strong Muslim world. These alternatives are injurious to Turkey, as well as to the Europeans. Both sides should do their utmost not to see Turkey become a party to the Western–Muslim confrontation that erupted in 2001. There should be other options available an answer to these detrimental developments. If Turkey's admission into the EU does not materialize, it could still be

given access to certain economic, political and military bodies of the EU, whose activity and decisions are of direct relevance to Turkey. This is because, in the final analysis, Europe is Turkey's hope for the twenty-first century, Turkey's markets are important to the Europeans, and its stability and its affinity with the Western democratic world is even more important.

### **The Turkish economy: a mass of contradictions**

Turkey has responded to the EU's and international financial bodies' charges and demands in a variety of ways. Particular attention was given to the economy, but changes were observed also as regards human rights and foreign policy. There has been a considerable progress in Turkey's economy – in several areas European standards were attained. In several others there were hopes that Turkey would be on a par with the newly industrialized countries (NICs) together with Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. There were years in which Turkey appeared on a list of ten countries denoted by the United States as “newly emerging markets” (NEMs). Nonetheless, neither the NICs nor the NEMs can any longer be considered economic “tigers.” Economically, the 1990s have badly affected the economies of these countries – Turkey included – and slowed them down by 15–20 percent on average.

The 1998 world economic slump – the collapse of the stock markets in southeast Asia, the spiral of inflation and deep devaluation of the national currencies in places like Russia, Malaysia and Indonesia, the practical bankruptcy of the economies there and debt repayments which stopped, the stagnation in South Korea and the recession in Taiwan – all seem to herald bad news. For Turkish traders and construction firms it meant losing between 7 and 10 billion dollars worth of investment in Russia. (By the end of 1997, the value of contracted work undertaken by Turkish firms in Russia totaled over 12.3 billion dollars.)<sup>51</sup> As a result, Turkey's public deficit – 7.7 percent in 1998 – jumped in 1999 to 12 percent. Similarly, the ongoing slowdown in European manufacturing which started at the end of the 1990s (the German economy might not show any growth in the year 2001) some of it related to the decrease in US imports of European products, have resulted in considerable European cuts pertaining to Turkish goods.

Detailed figures for Turkey are no different from the above. Of every TL10 of taxes collected in 1999 by the state, TL6.8 had to go into payment of interest accrued on domestic debts. Similarly, the GNP growth was only 1.8 percent, as against the government's modest 2.3 percent estimate.<sup>52</sup> The decline of the Russian “suitcase economy” brought about a sharp recession in Turkey. As of the late 1980s when communism collapsed in eastern Europe, and with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, east Europeans and traders from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) started to fill their luggage with Turkish goods and sold these later in their own countries. This Turkish export was estimated at 5.8

billion dollars in 1997. It decreased, however, to 3.7 billion dollars in 1998. By way of comparison, in 1990 the bilateral Turkish–Soviet trade was 1.8 billion dollars; in 1998 it was 9.7 billion dollars, or 12.7 percent of Ankara’s foreign trade. William Hale noted that following the luggage trade exports to the CIS, Russia began to rival Germany as Turkey’s biggest export market, buying about 4.1 billion dollars of Turkish goods in 1998, compared with 5.4 billion for Germany.<sup>53</sup> A 30 percent plunge was noted, mainly in the Turkish textile industry, but also in electronics, leather, footwear, and house hold goods, all heavily dependent on the trade with Russia. Istanbul’s Laleli market declined from a 0.8 billion dollar volume in 1996, to 340 million in 1997. All in all some 17,000 Turkish companies experienced severe difficulties or, even, went out of business.<sup>54</sup>

The “suitcase economy” has been Turkey’s unofficial export to Russia and the driving force behind Turkey’s annual 8 percent growth rates between 1995 and 1997. With the eruption of the crisis in Russia (August 1998), and when the numbers of Russian tourist traders visiting the country dropped off, Turkey’s growth dramatically plunged. Accordingly, Russia’s share of Turkey’s official exports fell in 1999 to a mere 2.3 percent. This was 6.9 percent in 1998, or 1.35 billion dollars. One result of the Russian crisis was that foreign fund managers lumped Turkey together with other emerging markets. They withdrew their investments from emerging markets and invested in safe, but low-interest earning US governments bonds. As the crisis in Russia unfolded, panicky institutional investors withdrew around 7 billion dollars of investment shares from the Istanbul Stock Exchange (IMKB), and from government bonds and treasury bills. Share prices on the IMKB dropped as much as 60 percent. Since then the index has recovered, but in term of US dollars, it is still down by 15 percent on the 1998 index, mainly because of the lack of foreign funds in the markets. Another fallout from the Russian crisis was that Turkish bank borrowing costs in international markets have risen by 30 percent.<sup>55</sup>

Russia, however, is not the entire story. In all, the years 1996–99 gave mixed results and implications as regards Turkey’s economy. On major items and indicators there were considerable decreases that meant recession. In 1997, for instance, Turkish exports to the EU amounted to 5.72 billion dollars. Earlier, in 1996, it was 12.08 billion. Turkish imports from the EU, for the year 1997, amounted to 11.17 billion dollars; in 1996 it was 21.9 billion. And while decrease of imports signals a healthy situation, in Turkey’s case it meant a slowdown in Turkish industry, which imports unfinished goods and commodities, turns them into finished goods, and re-exports them. One should also bear in mind the heavy share of Turkish–EU trade: Turkey’s exports to the EU (1999) consist of 53.7 percent of the country’s total export. In the same year, 52.7 percent of Turkey’s imports originated in the EU.<sup>56</sup>

Some facts and figures concerning Turkey’s imports and exports will help explain the changes and fluctuations in the country’s economy and foreign trade. At the end of the 1990s Turkey’s imports by country groups amounted to: 52.7 percent from the EU, 4.6 percent from the Middle East, and 9 percent from

the CIS. Exports by country groups were 53.7 percent to the EU, 8.3 percent to the Middle East, and 5.6 percent to the CIS. Germany topped the list of countries from where Turkey imports its goods. Yet, the decline of imported German goods between 1998 and 1999 – from 6.2 billion dollars to 4.8 billion, a reduction of 24.1 percent – clearly point to the economic recession Turkey has experienced. The same picture shows a decline of imports from Italy (from 3.6 billion dollars in 1998 to 2.6 billion in 1999, a 28.8 percent decline), from the United States (a 27.9 percent decline, from 3.6 billion dollars to 2.6 billion), from the UK (from 2.3 billion dollars to 1.8 billion, a 23.5 percent decline), and from Japan (from 1.8 billion dollars to 1.2 billion, a 34.7 percent decline). Altogether, Turkey's imports in 1998 amounted to close on 39 billion dollars; in 1999 it declined to 32.5 billion, a 16.5 percent decline.

The export balance shows slightly better results. It is indicative of the strength of the major trend in the Turkish economy in the 1990s, namely, the increase of the export sector. The huge gap that existed between Turkish exports and imports was dramatically cut. In 1996, for instance, Turkey's exports amounted to 23 billion dollars, imports were 43 billion. Figures for 1999 show 21 billion dollars of exports and 32 billion dollars of imports. This points to the viability of the export trade in the Turkish economy. Alas, it is also a sign of an economic recession, exemplified by the reduction of imports.<sup>57</sup>

The grand total of Turkey's exports in 1998 was 22.48 billion dollars. In 1999 it was 21.4 billion dollars, a 5.7 percent decline. Distribution by countries shows a sharp decline in Turkish exports to the Russian Federation – from 1.32 billion dollars in 1998 to less than 0.5 billion in 1999, a decrease of 62.5 percent. In 1998 Turkey exported goods worth 4.56 billion dollars to Germany; in 1999 this declined to 4.45 billion, a 4.9 percent reduction. Also of importance is the increase in Turkish exports to the United States: 1.93 billion dollar in 1998, and 2.2 billion dollars in 1999, a 4.1 percent increase. Similar results were experienced with Turkish exports to the UK: 1.43 billion dollars in 1998, 1.5 billion in 1999, a 2.3 percent increase. To Israel – ninth among the ten top buyers of Turkish goods – Turkey exported (in 1998) 405 million dollars worth of goods. In 1999 this amount passed 0.5 billion dollars, an increase of 16.8 percent.

Overall, Turkey's economy is a strange combination of enormous successes and huge failures. The country keeps swinging back and forth between prosperity and recession. Success, prosperity, inflation, stagnation and recession – a most peculiar mixture hardly explainable by experts and academics – characterize the economy in the past decade. "Economists scratch their heads over how Turkey sustained what the textbooks declared unsustainable – long-term chronic inflation," writes Andrew Finkel in *Time*.<sup>58</sup> Asaf Savas Akat mentions that Turkey is the only middle-income and sizeable open economy with relatively developed market structures that has managed to sustain average annual inflation rates around 60 percent for a long period of time without falling into hyperinflation or successfully reducing inflation to reasonable levels.<sup>59</sup> Together with Japan and Brazil, the World Bank rated Turkey, with

its 4.3 percent growth rate during the 1965–98 period, as *the seventh fastest growing economy* among thirty countries. In this period Turkey's gross national product rose from 50 billion dollars to more than 200 billion dollars. The economy thus quadrupled. A striking trend in these years was that Turkey's industrial growth was not limited to the Istanbul and Marmara regions but new centers emerged in inner Anatolia. Nicknamed the "Anatolian Tigers," the industry thrived in Denizli, Urfa, Gaziantep, Konya, and in many other places. Indeed, the country's business seemed to be business, as Andrew Mango writes.<sup>60</sup> Still, though production quadrupled, income per person only doubled – from 1,590 dollars to 3,160 dollars – owing to a rapid population increase.

In 1995–97 Turkey enjoyed a 7–8 percent economic growth rate. The trade volume for 1998 was 72.8 billion dollars; it had been 1.5 billion dollars in 1970. In 1994 Turkey exported goods worth 18 billion dollars; in 1999 this was 22 billion.<sup>61</sup> At the end of the 1990s the country seemed to have weathered the global crisis well: although in 1998 the growth rate decreased in comparison with previous years, its economy grew 3.8 percent in real terms. In the same year Turkey's GNP increased by 6.33 percent, rising from 192.4 billion dollars in 1997 to 204.59 billion. The country's GDP rose by 5.55 percent, from 188.75 billion dollars in 1997, to 192.23 billion in 1998, and per capita income rose from 3,080 dollar to 3,224 dollars. Yet, again, although the GNP increased in 1998 by 6.33 percent, the per capita income increased by only 4.68 percent because of a 1.58 percent population increase.<sup>62</sup>

Comparatively Turkey's economy did well in the past twenty years. As above, the country more than tripled its per capita income – from 1,000 dollars to 3,220 dollars – surpassing neighbors it previously trailed, such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Russia. This was accomplished despite inflation that rarely dipped below 70 percent, an achievement that defied conventional economic wisdom. In spite of inflation – to overcome this its businesses frequently calculate future prices and costs in US dollars, then convert back into TL at the current exchange rate at the time of payment – Turkey's growth in 1998 was much higher than, say, that of South-Korea, or Japan, which have borne the brunt of the Asian economic crisis. Its unemployment rate is low, 5.8 percent – the expectation for 2001 being 6.9 percent – half that of France, Germany and Italy, and close to that of Japan and the United States that stand on 3 and 4.5 percent, respectively. Its 203.8 billion dollar GNP (in 2000) makes Turkey the eighteenth largest economy in the world. In that year the country dropped down one level owing to a 6.4 percent decline in GNP, attributed to the devastating earthquakes and to the aforementioned crisis in Russia.

Turkey topped the list of Europe's fastest growing market for credit cards. In 1999, Istanbul's stock exchange grew faster, in dollar terms, than any other market in the world. Turkey is one of the largest dispensers of foreign aid relative to its GNP, where it was once a recipient. On average, Turkey has a 22 billion dollar foreign currency balance and its industrial output rose more than 10

percent between 1996 and 1997. The country ranks among the world's *top ten producers* of iron and steel – producing 13 million ton annually. According to Purchasing Power Parities Turkey holds seventeenth place but, based on US values, Turkey's 200.5 billion dollar income is in fact worth 419 billion, and the 3,000 dollar income per capita is equal to 5,500–6,000 dollars.<sup>63</sup>

Privatization reduced the role of the government in the economy from 50 to 25 percent. Unfortunately, the process was indefinitely postponed in late 1998, waiting to be continued by strong coalition governments. Turkey's huge public sector deficits emphasize the urgency in expediting the privatization process. Usually, successive Turkish governments covered the deficits by printing money or borrowing at sky-high interest rates. Indeed, 50 percent of the country's budget is allocated to cover the public debt. In 2000, privatization restarted and was expected to produce 7.6 billion dollars. A 20 percent stake in Turk Telecom – the twelfth largest communication company in the world – worth a few billion dollars, was at risk. However, foreign buyers failed to show up for such a small package so it was removed from the list for privatization. Strong objections, from military echelons in particular, blocked the sale to foreigners of more than 39 percent of any governmental company, Turk Telecom and the national carrier, Turkish-Airlines, in particular, apparently in accordance with the articles of the Turkish law.<sup>64</sup>

“Foreigners will again be our masters,” is the Turkish battle cry that resists the privatization demand of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In this mood, whoever complies with the IMF's conditions, like Kemal Dervis, Turkey's Secretary for the Treasury since February 2001 (he resigned in August 2002), is at risk of being labeled a “foreign agent.” Indeed, the IMF and the World Bank made expediting privatization a condition of granting a large and very much needed loan to Turkey. From 1999 through to 2001, the IMF allocated Turkey 19 billion dollars; during the period 2002 to 2004 Turkey would borrow another 16.3 billion, thus becoming the IMF's largest borrower. Eventually, the two financial bodies would give Turkey a financial support of 24.7 billion dollar. Accordingly, they further insisted on cutting public spending as a proportion of GNP by 2.5 percent, and the liquidation of state-owned banks and government involvement in the private banking system.<sup>65</sup> Turkey's state-owned banks serve the political machine, writing off debts as political favors, with staggering accumulated losses – 20 billion dollars for the two largest banks. Since the end of 2000 the government has directly controlled twelve insolvent banks where the Bank of Turkey overseeing system “failed” to discover their imminent bankruptcy and collapse, mainly due to widespread corruption.

The IMF also insisted on the liberalization of the tobacco business, another market that is heavily controlled by the government, and on cutting subsidies to the farms that grow it and supply 600,000 jobs. General reduction of subsidies, decentralization and privatization of the country's energy market and power stations as well as privatization of Turk Telecom and the sale of 51 percent of Turkish Airlines, were but a few of the other demands of the IMF.

One can easily trace, in the Turkish objection to the IMF's stipulations on privatization and sale of government assets to foreigners, the fear of a recurrence of the ill-famed Ottoman capitulation system. The word in Turkey was not a call for painful changes and catharses but for the rejection of the IMF's "dictate."<sup>66</sup> The Sevres syndrome exists also in Turkey's economy: foreigners just look for the occasion to gather for the kill and to slice off parts of Turkey – its territory or its economy.

Ilhan Kesici, an MP, described the "comeback," the leap forward of the Turkish economy:

By the 1980s, the state seemed to be breaking down. There were queues, even for olive oil, something in which we normally ought to be able to bathe babies. Foreign exchange transactions were a nightmare for the economic bureaucracy. Now these days are gone . . . In 1922, if you wanted a table with non-wobbly legs, you had to ask a Greek carpenter. Now there is a Turkish tile factory in Wales, our banks are well represented in Germany, and we are having [*sic*] to farm out production of television sets and even fighter aircraft to Poland, Slovakia, and Egypt. I do not believe that Turks have made an appearance of this sort on the European stage since the early 17th Century. We are, in other words, coming back.<sup>67</sup>

In spite of the above rosy information, some deep and basic drawbacks badly affect the chances of Turkey being able to enjoy a stable economy. Financing a huge chronic gap between Turkey's exports and imports – 30 billion dollars as against 50 billion in the year 2000 – plus a habitual public sector budget deficit of few additional billions (10 billion dollars in 2000), lead the country's economy into a vicious circle of external and internal debts, amazing amounts of interest payments, and greatly contribute to the country's three-digit inflation. The latest UN Human Development Index ranks Turkey as a whole as seventy-fourth among the countries of the world, with a point value of 0.778 on a scale of zero to one.<sup>68</sup>

The country's rate of inflation in the mid-1990s was 97 percent, and the average rate in the past decade was 73.7 percent – by far the highest among the forty largest economies in the world. The Turkish economy grew in real terms 3.6 percent on average for the past twenty-five years and, accordingly, the per capita income should have been 6,000 dollars – twice the current figure – had there been less than 10 percent inflation in that period. On average, inflation robbed Turks of 30 percent of their purchasing power despite nominal increases in income. One thousand TL in 1990 was worth TL60 in buying power in 1995, TL18 in 1997, less than TL1 in 2000. Persisting inflation at the current rate means that TL100 of 1990 was only worth TL3 at the end of the year 2000.<sup>69</sup> Turkey's inflation dates back to the 1970s, to the extreme increases in oil prices. Political priorities, loss-making public banks, a heavily subsidized agricultural sector, a bankrupt social security system, poor and corrupt tax collecting system – all forced the government to borrow money to meet obligations. This heavily fueled inflation, kept interest rate high, and led to ever more expensive borrowing.

The good signs of 1999 vanished in 2000. The general elections of April 1999 produced a solid coalition government, inflation dropped to 64.7 percent thus approaching the 50 percent mark for the first time since the 1980s, and interest rates tumbled by nearly two-thirds to just over 30 percent. All, however, remained signs and vanished in 2000 and in early 2001. The 1999 sharp drop in tourism – for fear of PKK avenging the capture of Abdullah Ocalan – and the devastating earthquakes, among other things, resulted in a growth rate of *minus* 6.4 percent, and eventually this turned into the worst year since the early 1940s.<sup>70</sup> But the crisis continued and dramatically worsened in 2000 and 2001. In 2001 alone Turkey's GDP dropped by 8 percent. The "reassuring" words of Alan Makovsky, who is highly conversant with Turkey's realities, is indicative of the country's economic chaos: "The situation has now calmed somewhat: the stock market has crept back a bit and *interest rates are just barely above 100 percent.*"<sup>71</sup> Just few months earlier the interbank interest for December 2000 soared from 400 percent to 1,700 percent. For a time this passed 7,000 percent, later "calmed down," and settled at 3,000 percent. The Istanbul share market dropped by 50 percent compare with January 2000. Foreign currency reserves that on average stood at 22 billion dollars, dropped to 18 billion. Twelve banks collapsed and were taken over by the government and the central bank was forced to remove the Turkish lira's peg to the US dollar. In May 2001 a single US dollar was equal to TL1.35 million. The exchange rate was TL675,000 to the dollar in February 2001, and TL450,000 to the dollar in June 1999. Spiraling inflation resumed and at the end of 2001 Turkey again faced three-digit inflation. Unemployment in various places soared to 15 percent, though the 2001 national figure was expected to be 6.9 percent. Turkey's GDP growth in the years 2000 to 2002 declined by 7.1 percent and GNP per capita dropped sharply to 2,160 dollar (from 2,967 in 2001) – the lowest since 1994. Social, political and international implications of the crisis have been enormous: the gap between Turkey's situation and the standards required for it to join the EU widened. Prices of basic goods and commodities sky-rocketed, employers stopped salary payments owing to lack of money, the purchasing power of salaries and pensions that were paid were cut by half owing to soaring prices. People were fearful lest the military would take power, incidentally giving the coup de grace to Turkey's EU dream.<sup>72</sup>

Hopes, it should be recalled, were high. Just months before the crisis described above, the government promised to bring down the rate of consumer price rises to 25 percent by the end of the 2000, and to get down to single-digit increases by the end of 2002. Similarly, Turkey's central bank decided not to allow a higher than 0.9 percent per month devaluation of the Turkish lira, thus raised expectations that by the end of 2000 Turkey would achieve a 20 percent inflation rate. Six zeroes would then be removed from the Turkish lira exchange rate, so it will equal it to 1 US dollar or to 2 euros. Unfortunately, by the end of 2002 the lira is likely to be close to 2 million per dollar. Spiraling devaluation led to a loss of confidence in the Turkish currency, giving it bad names – "funny



money” and “phoney money” – and resulted in the Turkish lira’s replacement by the US dollar and the Deutsche Mark.<sup>73</sup> All the above was a heaven-sent gift for those Europeanists who adamantly preached that Turkey would never be able to keep up with EU standards.

In 1996 Turkey had a trade imbalance of 22 billion dollars, 11 percent of its GDP. In mid-1999 the country had a domestic debt of 37 billion dollars and foreign debt of 101 billion dollars – equivalent to half its GNP. This debt is owed by Turkey to European, American and Japanese banks. The government, who desperately needs cash flow to repay its debts, continues to issue high-interest, short-run, inflation-indexed government bonds. It encourages the local population to purchase these bonds, promising close to 90 percent interest payments. Turkey’s debts to its citizens grow accordingly: IMF estimations were that the country’s domestic debt would double by early 2001. In addition, the government must create 5 million new jobs, which is another high money-consuming role – the unemployment rate in 1998 was 6.3 percent and reached 7.3 percent in 1999 – to ease unemployment and to boost the economy, in particular in formerly war stricken areas.

The 3 million Turks who look for jobs contribute to the figure of 13.5 million people living in poverty in Turkey. United Nations reports indicate that one in seven Turks – 14 percent of 63 million – live in poverty. In Turkey it means below the daily limit of the equivalent of 1.48 dollars. Others quote a daily limit of 2 dollars, which then puts some 40 percent of the Turks under the poverty line. Not surprisingly, this signals that the country is getting poorer: the 1999 per capita annual income was expected to be 3,200 dollars; in reality it dropped below the 3,000 dollar mark and in 2001–2 plunged to just above 2000 dollars. In addition, Turkey is one of the worst countries with respect to distribution of income. Approximately half the population has to make do with a very small proportion of the GNP – one-fifth of it. “Today, the cost of a meal at an expensive restaurant in Turkey equals the *annual income* of someone from the lower classes,” is the *Hurriyet*’s version of this dangerous Turkish inequality.<sup>74</sup>

In the period from March 1998 to March 1999, poor performance was noted in two main sectors: services and industry. Industrial production declined by 7.6 percent, and the fall in importation of capital goods in early 1999 is a further clear indication of declining industrial production. Agricultural production, which saw a slowdown in 1997 – by all means a good omen in a modern economy – grew by 7.6 percent in 1998. When distribution of GDP by sectors is examined, it becomes evident that the share of agricultural production, which was 15.8 percent in 1997, increased to 17.6 percent in 1998, while the share of industrial production decreased to 19.6 percent in 1998 (having been 21.9 percent in 1997). Forty three percent of the Turkish workforce is employed in agriculture, but this sector contributes only 15 percent of the national income. President Demirel, an enthusiastic supporter of curbing the share of agriculture in Turkey’s economy, insisted on not more than a 10 percent rural sector and “on a society with less people, but one that is also stronger.” The only way of

“getting richer” and maintaining domestic peace, according to Demirel, is industrialization with fewer people tilling the land:

Here lies Turkey’s most basic problem. This is the root of our income distribution problem. Almost half of the population accounts for one seventh of the gross national product. Other countries have solved this problem not by increasing the share of the agricultural sector but by decreasing rural population. There is no other way. *Twenty acres of land, a tractor and a family of eight . . . This is Turkey’s most serious problem.*<sup>75</sup>

Summing-up Turkey’s economy in the 1990s and in the new millenium, one clearly notices several major trends. Exports demonstrated rapid growth, an increase of 13.1 percent in 1997, but soon slowed considerably due to the negative developments in external demand, and recorded an increase of only 2.7 percent in 1998. There were similar developments in the country’s imports: they fell from 49 billion dollars in 1997, to 46 billion in 1998 – a 5.4 percent decline – due mainly to a shrink in domestic demand but also to a fall in crude oil prices. In ordinary times, exports rise, imports decline, and cheaper energy could indicate a good future. However, the increase in exports was temporary, cheap energy has been a short-lived phenomenon, and the decline in production and the economic recession were better explanations for the decrease in Turkey’s imports.

The country’s interest rates are among the highest in the world – in 1998 they reached 145 percent. In 2001 interest rates decreased slightly but they are still around the three-digit area, something that bears acute economic and social implications. In addition, none of the six governments that have ruled Turkey since 1994 have succeeded in curbing public spending, reducing agricultural subsidies that drain government funds, and bringing up the retirement age of employees to internationally accepted levels to prevent the financially ailing social security system from breaking down. Nor has there been any effective effort to tax the black market economy, which has a turnover of 80 billion dollars, or even 140 billion according to another estimation, which, as William Hale explains, is enabling Turks to ride out crises which could otherwise be expected to be fatal.<sup>76</sup>

Tourism suffered a sharp decline in 1998 and 1999. The fear of the PKK avenging the capture of Abdullah Ocalan in 1998, and the series of earthquakes that rocked Turkey the following summer, caused many tourists to stay away from Turkey. Hotel occupancy during the 1999 season in Antalya was only 20 percent. Close to 9 million tourists visited Turkey in 1998, with tourism revenues reaching 11.2 billion dollars. Less than 6 million tourists came in 1999, reducing revenues to under 7 billion dollars. The sharp decrease in the country’s GNP for 1999 – minus 10 percent, from plus 4 percent in 1998 and minus 6 percent in 1999 – is to be partly attributed to the crisis in tourism. Improvement was achieved in 2000 and the target of more than 10.4 million tourists was reached (11.5 million in 2001), producing an 8 billion dollar industry – almost twice the figures for 1999. More than 2 million Germans who visited Turkey led

the way, followed by tourists from the UK and Russia. The decline of tourism to Israel as a result of the war with the Palestinians, diverted tourists to Turkey but also to Cyprus and Greece. A tourism revival in 2000 expected to yield an increase – though modest – of 1.5 to 2.5 percent in the Turkish economy, plus an inflation rate of “only” 40 to 50 percents (lower than the 67 percent of 1999). As already noted, the Turkish economic turmoil of winter 2000/2001 – some described it as a catastrophe – and the implications of the global economic slowdown, have pushed the Turkish economy backwards.<sup>77</sup>

The beginning of the new millennium has not brought good news for Turkey’s economy. The implications of the country’s economic crisis could have a detrimental effect, both internally and on Turkey’s international status. Alan Makovsky noticed that the emergence of Turkey as a regional power in recent years has been possible thanks also to a perky economy that has seen sustained growth, with occasional interruptions, over the past two decades. Makovsky also warned that, were the country to face long-term economic collapse, a less confident Turkey might no longer be a regional power, with heavily detrimental implications, for instance to the US perception of Turkey as a forward-moving supporter in a mainly hostile region.<sup>78</sup> Turkish decision-makers should therefore take care that the transition period towards better economic standards would be short, with minimal painful social implications that usually accompany the remedies to economic crises. Turkey’s friends should also contribute their share. An economically and socially weaker Turkey is a much worse option.

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# 4

## The quest for identity

### Turkish nationalism and Islam

Turkey professes to be a secular state, the only such country in the Middle East and the only secular Muslim country in the world. Turkey is a living example, though not without difficulties, of a country whose population is predominantly Muslim but which is not a Muslim state. Ayse Kadioglu supplies a brief but painful enough reminder of the reforms, better called trauma, that the country and its population had experienced, which helps when evaluating the interaction between state and religion in Turkey, what has been achieved in this field, and the almost religious zeal – “secular fundamentalism” – in which secularism has been applied in the country:

The proclamation of the Republic in 1923 was followed by the abolition of the office of the caliphate in 1924. Other steps were taken in the course of the 1920s and early 1930s towards secularizing the Republic. These included the abolition of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pious Foundations, abolition of religious courts, proscription of male religious headgear, namely the *fez*, dissolution of the dervish orders, reform of the calendar, and adoption of the Swiss Civil Code. By the end of the 1920s, radical reforms were passed such as dis-establishment of the state religion (10 April 1928), adoption of the Latin alphabet (1 November 1928), and the use of the Turkish language in the Islamic call to prayer (3 February 1932). These reforms constituted an onslaught on the existing cultural practices. They opted for a general state of amnesia, which would lead a process of estrangement of the people from some of their cultural practices.<sup>1</sup>

As Dogu Ergil writes, the disconnection of the Turkish society from its past allowed the ruling elite to see the people as an entity ready to be molded according to their vision of what society and the nation should be.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, separation from culture of the past was not confined to religious practices. In the pursuit for the unique Turkish nationalism (*Milliyetçilik*), different from the

cultures and civilization in its proximity, Turkey severed ties with basic features of the Arab, Persian and Islamic worlds, emphasizing instead the modern and Western alternatives, as well as the pre-Islamic past. Hakan Yavuz mentions that during the 1930s and the 1940s villagers with traditional attire were not allowed to enter the major streets in Ankara, and were relegated to the less conspicuous back streets.<sup>3</sup> A national narrative was supplied, in accordance with the rules mentioned above, that was to prove the uniqueness of the Turks, and their belonging to pre-Islamic and pre-Arab times. They are the descendants of the powerful Hittite Empire, whose capital was in Hatushash, near Ankara, and who, over the ages, made their way back to Anatolia from the prairies of Central Asia, the way shown to them by the Grey Wolf, the *Bozkurt*.<sup>4</sup> (This last symbol, though indicating that ancient Turkic peoples emanated in much older times than Turkey's Islamic or Arab neighborhood, was later adopted by Turkey's Pan-Turkists. The *Bozkurt* thus acts contrary to the idea of Turkish nationalism which centers on the Turkish State alone; see pp. 109–110.) The Anatolian peasantry, of whom the Ottoman elite did not think very highly, was now, in the Turkish Republic, praised as the pure core of the Turkish nation. Dogu Ergil supplies a fascinating description of the efforts to supply an alternative Turkish ideology to the so-called defunct past:

In the absence of a medieval high culture that could be labeled “Turkish”, the nationalist elite found their glory in a history that never was. The search for, and consolidation of, a new national identity were carried to such extremes in the 1930s that theories like the Sun Theory of Language were concocted. According to this “theory”, all languages emerged out of Turkish. As a reminder of those days, the presidential banner consists of a sun representing the Turkish Republic encircled by 16 stars, symbolizing the Turkish states that were presumably created by Turks throughout history. This fabricated glorious past was a panacea for Turkish pride wounded by the loss of empire and reincarnated as a poor, backward society that was occupied during the First World War.<sup>5</sup>

True, in the fervent desire to break with the past, sometimes resulting in painful situations, secularism and modernization should be credited with great accomplishments, mainly in the urban centers. Turkey could honestly claim to be the only country in the Middle East, indeed the world, with a predominantly Muslim population that is not an Islamic state. But Turkish realities are not monolithic. Many Turks have never really separated themselves – openly or covertly – from their Islamic cultural heritage, nor from Islam's religious practices. Many Turks consider Islam as the powerful counter-identity to the totality that Kemalists have applied in Turkey.

The state, its Western and secular establishments and elite, view Muslim manifestations as detrimental to the very existence of modern Turkey. Indeed, the growth of Muslim influence in Turkey cannot be downplayed. The 1970s and the first half of the 1980s were years of economic crisis in Turkey, stemming mostly from the global energy crisis but also from internal Turkish phenomena like the huge wave of immigrants from rural areas into Turkey's urban centers.



Those years subjected Turkey to acute inflation, shortages, unemployment, enormous expenditure on energy imports, and a slowdown in the absorption of Turkish workers in European countries similarly suffering from a recession. These difficulties, together with widespread existing feelings of being powerless, marginalized and excluded, in short belonging to the “have nots,” contributed to the rising power of radical ideologies – rightist, leftist, national and religious – and of Islam in Turkey.

Outwardly, more Turks appear to fast during Ramadan, more to attend Friday prayers in the mosques, and more women to wear veils. A 1997 survey on sects, communities, *shari'a* and foundations carried out in Turkey's major cities, reveals that 50 percent of the urban sector have religious morals and practice the necessities of Islam periodically. Thirty percent practice them every day. Though identifying themselves as religious, 16 percent do not practice the necessities of Islam.<sup>6</sup> No doubt findings pertaining to the rural sector would give much higher figures.

The struggle between Turkish nationalism, secularism, and Islam; between western modernity and traditional structure, appears to be gaining momentum. Turkey is probably more Western than modern, i.e. the country adopted Western styles without simultaneously changing or promoting its laws, freedoms, rights, etc. Turkish nationalism was the last to be extricated, molded and refined from the ethnic hodgepodge that characterized the Ottoman Empire. (“Since they saw themselves the owners of the Empire, no one expected them [the Turks] to claim the right of self-determination. The Serbs left first, then the Greeks, the Bulgarians and Armenians, and only the Jews had no option”.)<sup>7</sup> Practically a novice, Turkish nationalism had to face Islam, a well-established force, which is seen as a means for uniting all its followers and eliminating differences between them, i.e. between Turkey and its Muslim and Arab brethren, between Turkey and Islamic universalism or pan-Arabism.

Most scholars agree that although Turkish Islam shares many common features with other Middle East and Muslim movements, it has grown and developed in a very different political and social environment, shaping its unique nature. Turkey's Muslim ideology is tied up with Turkish nationalism in a unique fashion, because nationalism affected all spheres of life in contemporary Turkey. Religion and socialism – to name but two although far apart from each other – were among schools of thought and ideologies that were affected by Turkish nationalism. Still, there are Muslim Turks – they prefer to be called Turkish Muslims – who, although colored by patriotism, do challenge the secularist component and European identification of their society and of their country's Kemalist nationalism. These people question the intentions of the Turkish state when it comes to religious freedoms. Mete Tuncay, a leading Turkish intellectual, asserts that Turkish secularism does not mean a separation of politics from religion, but that religion is controlled by the state. The goal is to establish a kind of control mechanism to prevent religion from influencing politics.<sup>8</sup>

One milestone in the rise of Islam in Turkey was the officers' coup of 1980, in whose wake religious lessons were made compulsory in schools. The army

justified its intervention in domestic politics by pointing to the growth of the radical and Marxist left, particularly its militant and terrorist elements. The encouragement of “bearable” religious believers and of religious education in schools was considered by the army to be the antidote for the impact of ethnic extremism and the Iranian revolution, as well as leftist radicalism. “Islam’s green will defeat communist red,” was the mantra. Considered a factor of unity, Islam was thought to be the remedy for many divisions in Turkey, among them the Turkish–Kurdish conflict. The result: “Islam had finally been brought from the periphery to the centre of Turkish politics.”<sup>9</sup> Simultaneously though, all through the 1990s, the Turkish military dismissed hundreds of officers and non-commissioned officers (NCO) for being “excessively affiliated” with Islamic bodies. On 16 June 1998, for instance, 167 officers and NCOs were fired in the largest purge carried out in a single day.<sup>10</sup>

When Turkey reverted to a multiparty system in 1983, the Muslim opposition groups came to occupy a legitimate slot in the political system. People from the lower classes and many Kurds joined Islamic opposition parties because the existing parties did not address their needs. Furthermore, some of the opposition to the establishment, having failed to find its place in the political mainstream, was also drawn to the Muslim parties. In the 1995 general elections, for instance, in the western urban centers, the mostly Kurdish shantytowns voted overwhelmingly for the Welfare Party.<sup>11</sup> The poor attitude towards Turkish immigrants in Europe also contributed to their anti-Western and European feelings, which soon enough were expressed in Muslim extremism or a return to their old ethnic roots (i.e. Kurdishness). Political parties courted Muslim circles and granted them religious concessions in return for their votes. This may well explain the appearance of certain previously banned practices, such as calls to prayer in Arabic, Muslim publications, Muslim schools, and Muslim associations.

The Muslim parties gained ground in both general and local elections. In the December 1995 general elections, Muslim parties received about 21 percent of the vote, 2 percent more than in the March 1994 local elections. In the last three general elections, the Muslim parties have tripled their strength. Twenty-eight of Turkey’s seventy-six city councils, including Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, are ruled by representatives of Muslim parties. The result of the general elections in December 1995 showed the Refah Partisi, the Welfare Party, to be the largest party in Turkey – 21.2 percent. In short, a formerly marginal political element, which lacked legitimacy, found itself accepted into the political establishment.<sup>12</sup>

The resurgence of Islam in Turkey could also be linked to the growing prominence of Muslim oil-producing countries such as Libya, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Turkey’s dependence on energy imported from them in the 1970s, and their accumulated purchasing and investment power, induced the Turkish government to moderate its attitude towards Muslim circles (and to scale-down its relations with Israel – see Chapter 7). Similarly, the previously banned Arabic script, became increasingly evident in Turkish commercial areas, something that could be attributed to the affluent of the Arab world which, having been

deprived of Beirut as a place of entertainment, shopping and investment, took to Istanbul as one possible substitute.<sup>13</sup>

But above and beyond the political events noted here, ideological, economic and social motives came into play in the rise of Islam in Turkey. The crisis of communism throughout the world and the repression of the Turkish left channeled many marginal or extreme groups to another radical alternative – Islam. When growing portions of the population fail to ameliorate their lot through modernization, the answer to inflation, unemployment, uncontrolled urbanization and exorbitant real estate costs, slums and alienation, is Islam. Islam seemed to offer a third way: neither capitalism nor socialism. It is a response akin to the response of the world's poorer peoples to secularization, the collapse of communism, Western materialism, capitalism, globalization, and the intrusion – even imposition – of alien, principally Western, cultures. It is a search for identity on the part of people whose rulers have adhered to the West and its values to an excessive degree, while they themselves find Western luxuries unattainable.

The Muslim revival is doubly powerful when Muslim organizations and political bodies move in to take the place of enfeebled and impotent government. It should be noted that some 1,500 new mosques are constructed annually. Altogether there are more than 80,000 mosques in Turkey – a mosque for every 800 people – some of which clearly indicating the strength of religious defiance vis-à-vis secular Kemalism. See, for instance, the monumental Kocatepe Mosque in Ankara that overlooks Anitkabir, Atatürk's mausoleum and burial ground. But apart from soul saving, Muslim bodies also provide education, health services, housing, and employment. Islamic banks offer interest-free loans, as Muslim law dictates. Muslim groups allocate food and money to the poor. Millions of poor migrants, many of them of Kurdish origin, who were forced to leave the war torn areas of southeast Turkey, looked for sustenance from these Muslim bodies. This support was not granted to them by Turkey's secular parties. Above all, a common religious solidarity and a sense of belonging – so important for uprooted people – was provided for them by the Islamic Refah Partisi.<sup>14</sup>

Does all this constitute a threat to Turkey's unique status in the surrounding Arab and Muslim worlds, to its links with the West, to its aspirations for Europeanization, to Turkish democracy? There is no single answer to these questions. Those concerned for Turkey's image in view of the Muslim revival are worried mainly over the failure of the state in the social and economic domains, and its replacement by Islamic organizations. The price of public welfare, when carried out by religious or even fundamentalist circles instead of the government, is exploitation of the misery of the masses – particularly migrant villagers and Kurds uprooted from their home provinces. Since the outbreak of the PKK rebellion in 1984, some 3 million Kurds have relocated from the southeast of the country to its western provinces. As a consequence, 3 million Kurdish residents have transformed Istanbul into the world's largest Kurdish city. Adana, too, is now a Kurdish city, so is half of Izmir. The unfortunate people receiving hand-outs are told that Western progress is to blame for their troubles, and that Islam

will better their lot. When the beneficiaries expressed their gratitude in the polling booths by awarding their votes to the Islamic parties, they altered the political balance in Turkey's municipalities, and doubly so at the national governmental level.

Some grave consequences have followed upon this trend. Wherever the Muslims were triumphant, hostels for battered women were closed. In a number of places restaurants serving alcohol were shut down. Efforts were made to segregate men and women on public transport, and Muslim mayors have made such changes as painting all the bus stations green, the color of Islam. Banning was imposed on immodest advertising in posters and films, and in public there was insistence on modest attire. Municipal offices were closed early during Ramadan, and there were reports of intimidation of people who did not observe the fast. In the past, Turkish courts opposed closing early during Ramadan. Similarly, time off for workers for Friday noon prayers was not granted because the official day off is Sunday. Classical music and ballet are under attack as symbols of decadent Western culture. Neither are the city walls of Istanbul spared: it is said that Muslim extremists want them demolished, as they are a symbol of the Byzantine Christian regime that preceded the Muslim Ottomans.<sup>15</sup>

Conversely, there are those who see no threat in the Muslim revival and its expression in Turkey's cities – the countryside is traditionally devout – even going so far as to predict a *reduction* in recruitment to Islam. Admittedly, Islam is more evident on city streets – women wear veils, men are bearded, long rows of worshipers prostrate themselves at prayer, Muslim charities and businesses and grassroots organizations of the Muslim parties are active everywhere. And everything is so discernible. As Nulifer Gole put it: “instead of asking for assimilation and equality the Islamists claim differences, much as U.S. Afro-Americans have done . . . ‘Islam is beautiful like black is beautiful.’”<sup>16</sup> But this might also be misleading, or could be differently interpreted. Most of these believers are migrants from the traditionally religious villages. The construction of transportation and communication networks has eased this migration, which was part of the mighty wave of industrialization and urbanization that has swept Turkey since the 1950s. During the past two decades, cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have increased their populations to 9.3 million, while places with a population of 2,000 or less have decreased by 1.6 million. To give but one example from the research of Resat Kasaba and Sibel Bozdoğan: in 1927, 12.5 percent of the Turks lived in cities with over 20,000 inhabitants, whereas in the year 2000, 71 percent of Turkey's population is classified as urban.<sup>17</sup> The argument therefore goes that the numbers of the faithful have not increased, they have merely relocated from countryside to city, thus become more visible. Furthermore, urbanization holds out prospects of moderating the rise of Turkish Islam. The number of villagers who pray at least once a day stands at about 70 percent; the number drops dramatically to 24 percent in the cities. Dwindling numbers of city-dwellers fast at Ramadan, and attendance in the mosques is smaller than in any other Muslim country. In other words, the villager's exposure to urban culture is liable to temper his or her

Muslim fervor, for past experience shows that today's city-dweller – yesterday's villager – is less drawn to Islam and its attractions.<sup>18</sup>

A review of the history and nature of political Islam in Turkey – for example, the rise to power of the Welfare Party under Necmettin Erbakan and its brief tenure there – reveals that the threat the Islamic parties posed to Turkey's identity was significantly less than the authorities feared. There was a huge difference between Turkey's Islamic parties and the radical militant Muslim parties of Iran and Algeria, and it is not by chance that Turkey is rarely mentioned in surveys discussing Middle East religious fundamentalism. Only a minority among Turkish Muslim believers consider Islam and its universal aspects to be superior to their country's nationalism and patriotism. A brand of political Turkish-Muslim synthesis exists which emphasizes the national needs of the country (for instance: the right-wing Nationalist Action Party, led by Alparslan Türkeş; see p. 110).

Erbakan's short-lived regime – from June 1996 to June 1997 – failed to allow one to draw clear-cut conclusions about the nature of Muslim politics in Turkey. They made no changes in foreign policy – neither withdrawing from NATO, nor severing ties with “the microbes of the Zionist banking system” – neither did they try to put engulfing internal Muslim reforms into effect. For example, nothing materialized from Erbakan's promise to build a mosque at the center of Istanbul, in Taksim Square, across from the Atatürk Cultural Center, an icon of secular Turkey, or in Cankaya, the section of Ankara where the presidential palace is located.<sup>20</sup> A similar fate awaited the proposal to allow women government employees who wanted to attend work wearing head coverings, or – unlike in municipal offices – for shorter working hours during Ramadan for government employees who obey the fast. As Philip Robins observed, the government was considered by most to be a continuation of the previous one. Being in opposition Erbakan spoke loudly against Turkey supporting US bombings in north Iraq, and Turkey called it “a second Sevres,” and was extremely critical of Ankara's contacts with Israel. But, once in power, he concurred – often reluctantly or retrospectively, when it was found that he had been ignored – with these very Turkish moves.<sup>21</sup>

In June 1997, Erbakan was forced to step down under pressure from the military. The reasons given were that the policies and actions of his government were not commensurate with the principles of the constitution with regard to democracy and secularity. It was not the first time Erbakan had fallen foul of the army, which had already dissolved two of his political creations, and both times after launching a coup. In 1970 the Generals had disbanded the Islamic National Order Party and, in 1980, the National Salvation Party. Rather than risk a third coup and see the Welfare Party go the way of its predecessors, Erbakan chose to play by the rules of, the albeit very Turkish, democracy, and resign. He was to be sorely disillusioned. In January 1998 Turkey's Constitutional Court declared the Welfare Party illegal on the grounds that its platform and policies contradicted Turkey's secular constitution – from the time the court was established in 1963

until 1998, it had dissolved twenty parties for these reasons. It was the third party led by Erbakan to be dispersed and Erbakan himself was excluded from all political activity.

Eleven months of Muslim rule, 1996–97, had made it clear that “Turkishness” and Turkish democracy were still more vital than any Muslim principle. It is interesting to note that 41 percent of the voters for the Muslim Welfare Party defined themselves as secular and considered Atatürk, not Mohammed, their most important historical figure. Nor is *Jihad* – Holy War – considered a practical method for achieving any of the aims of the party program.<sup>22</sup> Disagreements do exist, and they are painful as the following words show, but they are not carried to excess. For instance, Erbakan protested that “If I make a speech and say this is what our dear Prophet Muhammad said, they will start banging on the desks and protesting. This is not secularism, it is enmity toward religion.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly bitter was Abdullah Gul, member of the Refah and a former Minister of State: “They want to create another religion, which is atheism. It’s the secular people who are not tolerant, and they want to impose their lifestyle here.”<sup>24</sup> The struggle, even conflict, between Turkey’s secularity and Islam goes on, but it does not appear as extreme as the Iranian or Algerian models. A devout Muslim headed the government in Ankara; a no less devout Muslim Prime Minister relinquished this post, his party later to be declared illegal. There was no trace of Erbakan’s vow to pursue his policy “with or without blood.”<sup>25</sup> All was done democratically, admittedly Turkish democracy.

The little that Erbakan did on foreign policy was no more impressive. Perhaps he did not have enough time. Nothing of “Islamic fraternity” came out of his much publicized visits to Iran, Malaysia, Algeria and Libya. Interestingly, Erbakan likened his return from Tripoli to no less than the homecoming of a victorious Roman tribune. In Tehran he clearly failed to contain the Kurdish issue on the basis of Muslim brotherhood; Iran has not stopped granting facilities to the PKK.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, nothing substantive emerged out of the November 1996 twenty Muslim countries conference that Erbakan had organized. Neither was the D-8 bloc, launched in Istanbul in 1997, any more of a success. The idea was to promote trade and economic cooperation among the 800 million combined populations of the eight Muslim developing countries. Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia account for 4 percent of world trade, but with whom Turkey’s trade is less than 4 percent of its total foreign trade. Why, then, not changing the picture by calling on the Muslim countries to abandon the American dollar as the basis of trade and increase mutual trade from the 10 percent of today to 90 percent in the future? The Refah party, it should be recalled, vigorously opposed Turkey’s accession to the EU – the custom agreement signed with Turkey was “Frankenstein’s poison.” Accordingly, the colonial, unjust, oppressive, Christian West was not an option, let alone that it is inferior. On a trip to Kuala Lumpur, in August 1996, Erbakan declared that Western development has been dependent on Islamic intellectual contributions – Arab arithmetic, for example – and that Western scientific

progress is hindered by belief in the Trinity. "Many think he is often unable to distinguish between fantasy and reality," commented Morton Abramowitz, Washington's former ambassador to Ankara.<sup>27</sup>

As Atila Eralp summed up, the West, the EU in particular, being a Christian community organized to undermine the Muslim world, the pro-EU lobby in Turkey being a part of a Zionist plot to sow dissent among Muslim countries – this was the world of Erbakan.<sup>28</sup> Obviously, nothing of Erbakan's "Islamic openings," "Islamic automobile," or "Islamic aircraft" materialized or brought gains to Turkey. On the contrary: "Eleven months after his [Erbakan's] accession to power, Turkey's relations with most other Muslim states were worse than before," concluded Andrew Mango.<sup>29</sup>

Even Erbakan's signature on a twenty-five year, 23 billion dollar agreement, for the annual supply of close to 10 billion cubic meters of Iranian gas to Turkey, was actually the final step in a long-term process, that started before the Refah came to power. The Iranian project was on the agenda of the two foreign ministries since 1995, when Turkey had decided to diversify its energy sources, and to use imported natural gas instead of the local low-grade coal. The Ankara example encouraged Turkey to continue the use of natural gas. The conversion in Ankara to natural gas has finally made the air in the capital fit to breathe. The projected pipeline for Iranian gas is therefore meant to serve Erzurum, Sivas, Kayseri and Konya – all grim towns enveloped in smog in the harsh winter weather.<sup>30</sup> The entire deal consists of 228 billion cubic meters of gas. If both sides completed their obligations and each constructed on his side the necessary facilities, the first transport of Iranian gas was to reach Ankara by 1 August 2001. Next to Russia (more than 30 percent), Iran (12 percent) will thus become Turkey's biggest gas supplier – until the gas deal with Turkmenistan materializes (see p. 127). However, this dependency raised much concern, particularly in Washington, as to the leverage Tehran could use against Turkey.

Turkey's energy needs are increasing quickly; the country is the fastest growing gas market in Europe. Its gas demands during the 1990s have been growing at 10 percent a year, and by the year 2005 it is expected to have quadrupled to 45 billion cubic meters, and more than 80 billion meters by 2020. Oil needs are similarly urgent: the country produces about 3 million tons of crude, which is a mere 13 percent of its consumption, the rest being imported. Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt are Turkey's oil market and the country constantly diversifies its supply sources. The forecast is for close to 50 million tons of oil imports by the year 2010, 40 percent of it from the Caspian region and Russia. Hence, if power cuts and gaps are to be avoided a decade or two from now, proper planning and large investment are needed in the energy market. It is estimated that Turkey will need to triple its total generating capacity by 2015 to meet rising demand – from today's 27,000 megawatts to more than 85,000 megawatts. The country's consumption of oil, gas, coal, hydro-energy, etc. for the production of energy, currently equals to 71 million ton of crude oil – 41 percent oil, 16 percent gas, 30 percent coal – might increase to 300 million

tons by the year 2020. It will then consist of 27 percent oil, 29 percent gas and 32 percent coal.<sup>31</sup>

As mentioned above, Erbakan was forced to step down under pressure from the military. The Generals accused the civil echelons of ignoring excessive religious activities and of failing to impose the secular articles of the Constitution. The army demanded on 28 February 1997 that Erbakan order a number of reforms to restrict what was perceived as religious fanaticism and Muslim extremist politics. After he balked at implementing these demands, Erbakan tendered his resignation in early June 1997. With Turkey facing a conflict between its first Muslim Prime Minister and the military, the scenario of the Gulf War did not repeat itself: in the summer of 1997 resignations were handed by the politicians, not by the Generals.

Among other things, the Prime Minister was asked to reinstate Section 163 of the political penal code – the section had been annulled in 1991 – which prohibits religious political activity that is a threat to the secular state. Accordingly, new laws were to be enacted that would restrict such detrimental activity. The army insisted on a uniform secular education for all and a limit to the number of Muslim-sponsored schools' graduates who would be admitted into the cadres of the civil service. A great deal of attention and demands for cuts were focused on the government-controlled Directorate of Religious Affairs, with a 350 million dollar budget – exceeding that of five combined ministries<sup>32</sup> – which has expanded from 50,000 staff in the 1970s to 100,000 in the 1990s. The Directorate is responsible for the country's 80,000 mosques, 600 religious high schools, 4,000 religious courses and 24 college-level programs that turn out Turkey's future Islamic scholars and imams.<sup>33</sup> Other demands related to a reduction in the number of theological seminaries and prohibition of anti-secular broadcasts in the Turkish media. An insistence worth noting was for a ban on sales of skins from animal sacrifices in the Muslim holiday Eid al-Adha, or the Feast of the Sacrifice, called Kurban Bayram in Turkey, marking the end of the Haj, the Pilgrimage to Mecca. The intention was “to kill these Islamic groups in their embryonic stage, and it starts with [the proceeds from] sheepskins.”<sup>34</sup> This prohibition – on the books for a long time – has until recently been widely ignored. The Turkish Justice Ministry announced that it would prosecute and insist on six-month prison punishment for those who illegally trade in sheepskins, one of the products of the Bayram slaughter. Proceeds from the skins used to go to religious groups and to Muslim parties, though the government encouraged it to be donated to secular or military bodies.<sup>35</sup>

During his year in office Erbakan's government was cited for “incompetence and lack of preparation for running Turkey.”<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, a number of bribery scandals were uncovered which cast a long shadow over the Refah's integrity. However, the Refah, was outlawed in January 1998, and succeeded by the Fazilet, the Virtue Party. The new body acted under the remote control of Erbakan, probably the reason why it did not do so well – it achieved 15 percent of the votes – in the April 1999 general elections. Expectations, it is worth



noting, were much higher. In the mean time it seemed as if the successive increases of political Islam in Turkey were blocked; a political party of 15 per cent does not seem too menacing.

International media, as well as Turkish public opinion, objected strenuously to the fact that it was the army that forced Erbakan out, violated Muslim religious freedoms, and brought about the dissolution of the Welfare Party. "A second Algeria" – a rather exaggerated terminology – was the example Turkey has been compared to. The *Chicago Tribune* pointed to a tragedy that looms over Turkey, referring to country's "arrogant" yet extremely strong military elite, who was launching war against, no less, student girls wearing the headscarf, the *hijab*, known in Turkey as "Turban," even when worn by women. A government decree from February 1998 barred university students from class for wearing Islamic dress; university rectors and presidents followed suit and ordered the ban enforced. On 10 June 1998, Turkish police and Muslim students scuffled in Istanbul University following the university's refusal to allow eleven female students wearing head coverings to take final examinations.<sup>37</sup>

The official explanation for the imposition of the headscarf ban in Turkish universities is that students' dress codes require Western-style clothes. Defying it by wearing the *hijab* was a symbol of political Islam, a matter threatening the Constitution's articles that decree Turkey is a secular state. Yielding to the *hijab* seemed to spokesmen from the Turkish middle class as the beginning of an irreversible process in which Turkey would become a Muslim republic. The secular republic was not going to survive this "political cancer," so they would warn. Turkish political Islam presses continuously for the Islamization of Turkey, including issues such as sex relations, family concepts, dress codes, private and public divisions, science, government and the rule of law. Hence, wearing the *hijab* is not a cry for democracy or for the preservation of human or feminist rights, but is the battlecry of Turkish political Islam. Granting a concession today, allowing females to wear head-coverings or students to be bearded – the ban on both has been on the books for a long time but is widely ignored – and tomorrow "they will not hesitate to force us all to cover ourselves, if they get a chance."<sup>38</sup>

All the above are senseless and do not exist at all, maintain the Muslim parties. There is no enforcement of Muslim values on women's attire, on education, or on law, and there is total revulsion towards all sorts of religious violence. They distance themselves from acts of terrorism such the horrific events of 1993, when militant Sunni activists set fire to the Madimak Hotel, in which an Alawite convention was being held, killing thirty-seven people. They proudly point to *Demokrasi, İnsan Hakları, Özgürlük* (Democracy, Human Rights, Freedom) as the principles that top the parties' agendas. Accordingly, Turkish political Islam is seeking to produce a balance between Western values and Muslim tradition, aiming at a state where the "Islamic headscarf and the miniskirt walk together hand in hand."<sup>39</sup>

It was education, however, that proved the most hotly contested battleground between Turkey's secular authorities and religious circles. The education system plays a crucial role in shaping Turkey's identity. Determining

children's minds, education could ultimately be the deciding factor as to whether secularism or religion win the day. Elementary education in Turkey has been compulsory since the 1950s. Still, quarter of the children do not attend primary school, and the average number of years spent in the classrooms was 3.6 years or, in the case of girls, 2.4 years.<sup>40</sup> According to research by the World Bank, by allocating 240 million dollars to education – 1.5 percent of its GNP – Turkey was, in 1995, on a par with Ethiopia. In practice it meant that Turkey's classrooms were vastly overcrowded, with fifty-five pupils per class, double the number in the West, and understaffed. Many teachers must moonlight.

The eight-year, replacing the old five-year, compulsory education law, was enacted in Turkey in 1998 by the government of Mesut Yilmaz. It aroused much protest from religious circles. The latter claimed that the law was aimed at preventing children from being influenced at an early age by religious education at the Imam Hatip schools, originally founded in 1951 for the purpose of training imams for the mosques. By the 1990s, the Imam Hatip schools were producing, annually, 53,000 diploma-qualified religious preachers. It was far more than Turkey's mosques annual requirement of 2,300 imams.

According to the new education law, the junior sections of the religious schools were to close down. Only the high school sections of the Imam Hatip schools were to remain open. The state primary school system was to be extended from five to eight years; however, even before this legal extension, most of Turkey's 15 million students attending state schools used to stay on for eight years in various modes of private, public and religious education. Another cause for much controversy were the Koran schools active in local mosques, which many primary school children attend in their spare time and holidays. Between the 1980s and the 1990s the number of these schools doubled to 4,700 and attendance reached 155,000. According to the new law, children now are only allowed to attend the Koran courses *after* graduating from the eight-year compulsory education.<sup>41</sup>

Before the enactment of the law, on terminating the five-year study, 500,000 pupils continued their studies at some 600 religious schools for an additional three- to seven-year period. And though the main wrath against the religious school system was during the Prime Ministry of Erbakan, it is interesting to note that his term of office was the only period with *no increase* in the number of religious schools. In 1951 Turkey had a mere seven religious schools attended by a miniscule number of pupils. In 1975 there were 150,000 pupils; in 1995 there were 479,000 pupils who attended 448 schools; and by 1996 there were 561 such schools boasting 493,000 students.<sup>42</sup>

In the 1997–98 education year, the Turkish Ministry of Education, in line with the Talim Terbiye Kurulu's (Training and Education Council's) recommendation, banned twenty-six textbooks, which, it claimed, espoused "reactionary propaganda", a typical euphemism denoting religious fundamentalism or politicized Islam.<sup>43</sup> Various changes were made in the remaining textbooks to be used during the eight-year compulsory education and in high schools. Philosophy became a compulsory class on the grounds that it teaches students to

develop skills of “thinking and discussing.” Social and political issues were added, among them topics related to the EU, human rights, traffic education, and environmental and health issues like AIDS, and organ transplants. National security classes were incorporated in high school curricula. The Turkish armed forces and their vital importance to the country’s well-being and in defending principles of democracy, prosperity and secularism, is a subject that has recently been introduced. Conversely, there is also a course on “Fundamentalist Reactionarism,” which explains “why some do not want Turkey to develop and become modern.”<sup>44</sup>

It is much too early to judge whether the government’s education reforms were successful, allowing the secular state to regain its hold over Turkey’s youth. It will take a great deal of time and money, particularly in view of the dismal state of Turkey’s education system, before these reforms, extensive and expensive, can take effect. Unfortunately, owing to the economic crisis of 1999–2000, and the violent earthquakes which hit Turkey in August 1999, not much money was available to devote to the education system. It is also extremely unlikely that the religious establishment will abandon its grip on Turkey’s children without a fight. At present, the state has the upper hand, but only time will tell who finally wins the battle for the minds of Turkey’s youth.

One observer, Richard Tapper, regarded the Muslim revival in Turkey, which began in the 1970s and 1980s, as a rebuke to those who predicted that modernization, education, progress and urbanization would lead to moderation of the Muslim character of Turkey. It seems, however, that at present Islam in Turkey is a culture of protest, a unique product of Turkey, not a recipe for revolution that harbors non-Turkish goals. Its political features, the *Repha Partisi*, for instance, have integrated into the Turkish pluralist system, and do not plot against Turkey’s very democracy, toward an ultimate goal of installing a religious-based pan-Islamic regime in the country. Even if looking forward to vanquishing the West through a blend of Turkism and Islam, the Muslim revival has yet to advocate the notion of a Turkish nation state for fear of angering opponents, particularly in the army. A not inconsiderable degree of political pluralism and separation of religion from state has taken firm root in Turkish society. Accordingly, the gains of the Turkish Muslim movements are clearly visible – in the year 1994, 700 of the 1,600 key ministry executives, provincial governors and other functionaries were believed to be *Refah* supporters. The party’s main activity focused on the urban poor, where it furnished them with services and commodities that the government failed to supply. Still, the *Refah* opted for caution, for struggle within the parliamentary system, desisting from a direct clash with *Kemalism*, defended by the Turkish military. It is worth noting that Turkish Muslim terrorists avoid attacking military or security personnel, but instead aim at secular intellectuals, media people, Jewish, American and Israeli targets. This clearly contrasts with Egypt or Algeria where police and army were preferred targets for religious radicalism. This says something about the deterrence of the Turkish military. It also shows that Turkish Islam does not consider itself

as separate from the state and its organs, but sees itself equally Turkish as the military. The peaceful way in which the Refah and the Fazilet accepted their forced dissolution and the jailing of its leaders (during 1998–2001), shows that Turkish Muslim parties' threatening character should not be overrated. It is, perhaps, indicative that two detailed surveys of Middle Eastern Islamic radicalism hardly mention Turkey.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, at the onset of a new millenium, it appears that it is secular Turkey that is the lion and Islam the lamb in our story. True, the two may on rare occasions, as in a zoo, live peacefully side by side, with the proviso that "every now and then we have to replace the lamb."<sup>46</sup>

### Turkey and Iran: opposite ends of the pole

Nationalism and Islam inevitably cause Turkey and Iran to cross each other's path and to hold perverse, if not painful, images each about the other. Iran, in particular, does not do much to assuage Turkey's suspicions. Tehran is thus perceived in Turkey as violently anti-Western, fanatically religious and intent on spreading its revolutionary message throughout the Muslim world, in short Kemalism's and Turkey's worst nightmare. Ceaselessly challenging, verbally and actively, Turkey's political, religious and social identity, constantly denouncing Ankara's traditional Western orientation, and vying for power and influence in Muslim Central Asia at Turkey's expense, it seemed that there was nowhere Turkey could turn without encountering Iran's grim, hostile face. Even in areas of presumable agreement, such as Iraq and Kurdish nationalism, Tehran pursued policies that flagrantly contradicted Turkey's interests. Though rivals, subjecting one another to a barrage of verbal abuse and intent on undermining each other's policies, and possibly sovereignty, Turkey and Iran have yet to come to blows, a puzzling state of affairs.

A secular, pro-Western democracy, representing everything Iran despises, Ankara was positive that Tehran sought to export the revolution to Turkey. Ankara knew that it would be an extraordinary coup for the revolution should Iran manage successfully to subvert Turkey, a key Muslim state, a symbol of profane worldly rule, as well as a strategic and ideological adversary. Regularly and violently, Iran raged against the Turkish secular state, against Turkish democracy, and against Turkey's blind adoption of Western values. Periodically, the two countries discover spy nets, expose terror cells, declare diplomats as *persona non grata*, etc. While Turkey blames Iran for supporting the PKK and acting against its secularism, democracy and Western values, Tehran suspects that Ankara, together with Azerbaijan, foments anti-Iranian feelings among the Iranian Azeris. Iranian dignitaries, while visiting Turkey, do not respect the Turkish flag or anthem, neither do they pay a visit to Ataturk mausoleum, a must on any visitor's itinerary. Ataturk, it should be recalled, was declared an "enemy of Islam" by Tehran. The refusal to bend down before the statute of

Ataturk while laying a wreath at the tomb, as demanded by protocol, was explained as violating the Muslim prohibition against bowing down to an idol. This was adding insult to injury, by implying that Turkey was not only a secular state but an idolatrous one to boot. The daughter of President Rafsanjani of Iran, observed during a visit to Ankara (December 1996), that the situation there reminds her of the last days of the deposed Iranian shah. Turkish press reacted furiously, adding "Thank you Ataturk," and praised the modernization existing among Turkish women in the secular Republic of Turkey as against the backwardness of the Iranian Muslim revolution.<sup>47</sup>

But, for all its sniping, criticisms, and insults, Iran was not foolhardy enough to confront Turkey head on, preferring instead to rely on covert and indirect methods of action. Not that this stopped Ankara, which deeply resented Iran's poisonous tirades and was unnerved by what it suspected were Tehran's ultimate objectives, of accusing Iran of meddling in Turkey's internal affairs, of subverting its population, of supporting anti-government terrorists, and launching clandestine operations, all in order to undermine the Turkish regime. In 1993, the celebrated intellectual and journalist – famous for his investigations into the drug trade as well as his exposé on the attempt on Pope John Paul's life, Ugur Mumcu, who was also one of the more outspoken supporters of Turkish secularism, was murdered. Ankara claimed that it was Iranians, or Turks trained by the Iranian intelligence service, who were responsible for this damnable deed. In May 2000, the Turkish police arrested some 300 Iranians for involvement in various terrorist actions, among them members of the Al Kouds (Jerusalem) terrorist organization, which had murdered Israelis, Americans, as well as Turks opposed to Turkey's apparent drift towards Islam. Ankara bitterly complained about Iranian declarations in favor of applying the Muslim *shari'a* law in Turkey, or against Ankara cooperating with the United States and Israel, or being a member in NATO. In February 1997, the Iranian ambassador to Ankara, Mohhamad Reza Bageri, threatened Turkey with God's punishment following its cooperation with Washington and Israel. These Turkish contacts, alleged Tehran, place Israel and the United States – both branded in Iran as the little and big Satans, respectively – as her immediate neighbors.

Turkey also accused Iran of actively supporting Turkish terrorist groups, including the Turkish Hizbullah, known as the Islamic Movement or Islami Hareket. According to the MIT, Turkey's National Intelligence Organization, Iranian diplomats hunted out and recruited pro-Islamic sympathizers, while the Iranian cultural centers were used to indoctrinate and subvert impressionable young Turks. The more malleable and radical youths were sent to Iran, where they were brainwashed and trained in military and terrorist tactics. Furnished with real and forged documents, and armed with weapons and explosives, they were returned to Turkey with orders to carry out terrorist attacks against Turkish citizens and leaders of the Iranian opposition. One million Iranians had fled the terrors of Khomeini's Iran into Turkey and, according to Turkey, the Iranian

secret service was directly implicated in the assassination of several of the more prominent of these Iranian refugees.<sup>48</sup>

Turkish–Iranian relations revolve around a series of issues. The two share common views as to the preservation of Iraqi integrity – though Iran protests over the Turkish army incursions into northern Iraq, regarding them as attempts to seek changes in the borders. Both countries share objection to Russian growing influence in Central Asia. Moscow, however, sees Iran as a balancing factor that moderates the influence of Turkey in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Both Iran and Turkey reveal objections to a Kurdish state, and Tehran does not fail to see the detrimental effect that realization of Kurdish national aspirations elsewhere might have on its own Kurdish or Azeri communities.

Ankara, however, resents the Iranian influence in the Caucasian Muslim republics and the improvement in Tehran's relations with the Gulf States – like the political dialogue with Saudi Arabia and the resumption of flights between Riyadh and Tehran. Turkey is also concerned because of the development of ballistic and probably nuclear capability by Iran. Iran, though, accused Turkey, together with the United States and Israel, of organizing the mass demonstrations that swept Iranian cities in 1999, protesting against the clerical regime in Tehran. Prime Minister Ecevit labeled the demonstrations a “natural” reaction against an “outdated regime of oppression.”<sup>49</sup>

Strangely, economics not religion, proved the main battleground between Turkey and Iran in Central Asia. Ethnically, Iran had little in common with the primarily Turkic nations of Central Asia. Moreover, the latter, mostly Sunni Muslims by faith, tended to firmly reject Shi'ite interpretations of Islam and were hardly susceptible to the preaching of Shi'ite Iran. The Republics' ruling elites were determined to preserve their countries' secular identity and embraced steadfast anti-Islamic policies. As a result, other than in Tajikistan, which is ethnically akin to Iran and whose Tajik language bares a close resemblance to Pharsi, Iran's attempts to disseminate its revolutionary Islamic message throughout Central Asia failed. Even in Tajikistan, which publicly displayed photographs of Khomeini, it was essentially the ruling elite's fear of being submerged by the Turkic majority of Central Asia that drew it closer to Iran. Seeking Tehran's protection, the Tajik authorities adopted the principals of the Iranian revolution. Not everyone in Tajikistan was happy with the regime's Islamization and the result was a vicious civil war. Nevertheless, there was always the possibility that Iran would exploit the Islamic issue, to stir up the people of Central Asia, who, straining under the burden of backward economies, corrupt regimes, and few social amenities, were highly susceptible to radical religious messages. The last thing Turkey wanted was a series of radical Islamic republics on its doorstep. Accordingly, constantly on guard, it offering the Republics' secular regimes all the help it could to combat any sign of an Islamic revival. Turkey expected that the secular ideologies and the secular political systems left in Central Asia by the Soviets would continue well into the post-Moscow era. Therefore, Ankara was even willing to acquiesce in the presence of its great rival for

regional primacy, Russia, in the area, aware that Moscow was much better placed than it to combat the perils of Islam.<sup>50</sup>

However, it was the Republics' economic potential that formed the focus of Iran's and Turkey's rivalry in the region. Ankara hoped to exploit its links with the Republics to become "a crossroads" between East and West, with goods shuttling back and forth between the Far East, the Republics, Europe and the United States across Turkish territory, to the benefit of the Turkish economy. It was a position that Iran threatened to usurp. Iran, like Turkey, had century-old contacts in the region, which it could and did turn to its economic advantage, often at Turkey's expense. The newly built railway lines between the Republics and Iranian ports, completed in 1996, which not only carried 1 million passengers and 8 million tons of cargo annually, but also reduced the transport time between Europe and southeast Asia to less than ten days, presents a very attractive and cheaper alternative to the Turkish land route. Iran, not Turkey, might turn into the "crossroads" where East meets West.

The choosing of national languages spoken by the majority in the Central Asian republics is of importance to our discussion. During the Soviet era, national languages, as well as the Turkic common heritage and kinship, were wittingly neglected because heterogeneity of languages was considered detrimental to Soviet unity. Instead, the Russian language has played a role in the Russian dominance and in binding the republics together. During the Soviet era almost every education or science institution was using the Russian language. Even today, Russian is still needed in practically every sphere of life. Cleansing the language of Slavic and Russian words, replacement of Cyrillic letters by Latinization of the language, not by Arabic scripts – these are symbols of nation building and of disconnection from the Russians and separation from the Iranians. The shift to Latin characters, not to the Arabic alphabet, brought about protests from Iran and Saudi Arabia. In spite of these pressures, the process is implemented *à la* Turkey in five Central Asian republics – Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan – though not in Tajikistan. There the majority speaks Pharsi, it is culturally and linguistically akin to Iran, and is changing to Arabic lettering.

Naturally, the move is slow: choosing a national language is not easy in multilanguage areas. Russian objection is not a barrier: Moscow is unwilling to intensify the process of de-Russification, hence tends not to support the 10 million Russians in the diasporas in Central Asia who seek prevalence of the Russian language. Also, when Latinization started in Central Asia, there was not in Turkey even one Russian language institute that could help the Republics "de-Russify" their languages: the disintegration of the Soviet Union had caught it, like so many others, unprepared. In time a few successes did take place: Turkmenistan tends to be a trilingual country with Turkmeni, Russian and English as official languages. For other republics the current switch to Latin alphabets is the third change in the twentieth century: at the beginning of the Soviet era Arabic script was replaced by the Latin alphabet, and in 1939 Stalin forced a

second change, to Cyrillic letters. In both cases the aim was to promote unity and to isolate the Soviet Turkic republics from Iran, or from Turkey.<sup>51</sup>

### Iran and the Kurds

One of the few things Iran and Turkey did agree upon was the need to preserve Iraq's integrity. With both countries supporting large ethnic minorities, Kurdish in Turkey's case, Kurdish and Azeri, in Iran's, neither had any doubt that partitioning Iraq on national-ethnic lines would undermine their own sovereign integrity. It was also why, loath to inflame their own minorities, they strongly objected to the formation of a Kurdish state. Yet despite this broad area of consensus, Iran and Turkey came close to blows over, on the one hand, Turkey's actions in the Kurdish "Safe Haven" in northern Iraq and, on the other, Iran's alleged support of the PKK.

Iran, as noted, took strong exception to Turkey's constant incursions into northern Iraq, which, it suspected, were designed to push Turkey eastwards at its expense. Ankara, on its part, accused Iran of cynically supporting the PKK, in return for a quiet life at home. Iran, while allowing its 4.5 million, mostly Sunni Muslim, Kurds a measure of cultural freedom – they were permitted to speak their own language and run their own television channels – nevertheless discriminated against them, so that the latter often strained against the Iranian bit. Consequently, there is no love lost and a great deal of friction between the Kurds and Tehran, who Iran utterly mistrusts, suspecting them of nursing nationalist sentiments. The last thing Iran wanted was for the PKK to extend its mandate into Iran, whipping up separatist feelings among its large and potentially dissident Kurdish community. Accordingly, Tehran reached an agreement with the PKK whereby the latter conceded that Iran's Kurdish community was off limits, while, in return, Iran allowed the PKK to rest and recoup on Iranian territory, on condition that the PKK did not launch attacks on Turkey from the 50 kilometer strip along the Iranian–Turkish Border. If this was not bad enough, Iran, Turkey accused, went well beyond the letter of the agreement, supplying the PKK with heavy arms and Katyusha rockets, some of which were used during an attack on a Turkish guard post in the Silopi district of Siyahkaya in January 1997. In 1998, following Syrian–Turkish anti-terrorist accord, which forced Syria to abandon the PKK, Iran, Ankara alleged, replaced Syria as the PKK's principal source of support. It allowed the PKK to establish camps in the Iranian villages along the Iranian–Turkish border and the Orumiyeh region. It provided the PKK with basic services and facilities as well as support. Wounded PKK guerrillas were treated in Iranian hospitals, while Iranian officials met with high-ranking PKK leaders, including Osman Ocalan, Abdullah Ocalan's brother.<sup>52</sup>

In the summer of 1999, Turkish jets, allegedly in pursuit of PKK guerrillas, attacked a base belonging to the Islamic Revolutionary Guards and an unidentified village near the town of Piranshahr in West Azerbaijan, along Turkey's



southeast border. The attack was followed by a brief exchange of fire between the Turkish aircraft and Iranian ground forces. But this was a rare occurrence. Unlike northern Iraq, where Turkey felt free to take action against the PKK, Ankara was unwilling to attack the PKK's bases in Iran, as such action would almost certainly provoke an Iranian military response. Therefore, the Turkish army restricted its actions to bombing PKK positions along the Turkish–Iranian border. Similarly, other than to lodge some very strong protests, Turkey took no action to end against Tehran's links with the PKK. This was in marked contrast to Syria, who, smaller and weaker than Iran, was intimidated, threatened, and ultimately forced to sever all ties with the Kurdish terrorist organization. The risks of pursuing a similar policy with Iran were simply too great.<sup>53</sup>

Turkey and Iran found themselves supporting opposite sides in the early 1990s Azeri–Armenian war over the Nagorno–Karabakh enclave: Shi'ite Muslim Iran was siding with Christian Armenia, Turkey supported Azerbaijan. The area became a battlefield for possession between Armenians and Azeris as Soviet power crumbled in the late 1980s, after independence from Moscow rule. In 1991 Nagorno–Karabakh, an Armenian enclave inside neighboring Azerbaijan, unilaterally declared independence from Azerbaijan. The war that erupted caused at least 30,000 deaths and created a million refugees, mostly Azeri. Armenia won the war and still holds a quarter of Azerbaijan's territory.

Armenia was the only country among the former Soviet Republics with whom Turkey failed to establish diplomatic relations. This was hardly unexpected given that the Armenians and Turks have a long history of mutual antipathy and enmity. The Ottoman Empire had often discriminated against, and occasionally persecuted, its Christian Armenian subjects. The empire's alleged responsibility – a responsibility Turkey utterly denies – for the death of 1.5 million Armenians during the First World War became a running sore in Turkish–Armenian relations, which continued to fester, blighting their relations right up to the twenty-first century. In the 1990s, Turkey, with some reason, suspected Armenia of secretly supporting militant Armenian separatists, as part of its policy of Armenian irredentism. It further believed that extremist Armenian nationalist groups were closely cooperating with the PKK in order to destabilize Turkey. Armenia, also to Turkey annoyance, hoped to establish close military ties with two of Ankara's arch-rivals, Syria and Greece, with the aim of coordinating their actions should any one of the three find itself at war with Turkey. (Tozun Bahcheli writes that at most the Greco–Syrian accord was no more than an informal understanding allowing, perhaps, Greek warplanes to land in Syria in case of emergency, such as Turkish attacks on the Greek Cypriots).<sup>54</sup>

Turkey cautiously sided with the Azeris – it limiting itself mainly to training Azeri troops and handing them medical supplies. Of all the Central Asian Republics, Azerbaijan was the closest to Turkey. With strong ethnic and linguistic ties – Azeri is the Central Asian Turkic language most similar to Turkish – and a shared history – the Ottoman Empire had ruled parts of Azerbaijan – Ankara had a special interest in that country. Turkey was the first to recognize Azerbaijan,

in 1991. Between 1991 and 1999, the two countries signed over 100 bilateral agreements, including trade and finance agreements, agricultural agreements, transport and telecommunication agreements, scientific agreements, health and social welfare agreements, and sporting and cultural agreements. Turkish construction companies signed contracts in Azerbaijan worth 2.5 billion dollars, equal, at least on paper, to what they earned in all the other Republics together. The Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline project to transport Caspian oil and gas to Turkey and Europe would, if realized, profit the partners to the tune of several billions of dollars a year. And this was only one of its many attractions, which included, among other things, the happy prospect of putting an end to Russia's monopoly over Central Asia's energy resources. Azerbaijan is looked upon as Turkey's closest partner in the Caucasus – most Azerbaijanis believe that Ankara is the only regional power with the will and ability to contain Russia's assertiveness.<sup>55</sup>

Admittedly, things did not always run smoothly. Ankara was unhappy at the Azeris' attempts to strike a balance between Russia, Iran and Turkey, while Baku worried that Turkey sought to carve itself too dominant a position in the country. But, on the whole, with Turkey looking upon Azerbaijan as its closest regional ally and the Azeris relishing Turkey's economic and other help and aware that Turkey was the only power capable of balancing even blocking Russia's invidious influence, it proved a warm and profitable relationship. The fact that both had a common enemy in Armenia served only to cement their relationship further.

Notwithstanding calls in Turkey for military activity, Turkey failed to come openly to the beleaguered Azeris' aid. Other than furnishing Baku with medical supplies, training Azeri troops, and offering some limited diplomatic support, it did nothing. This was partly because Turkey did not want, by siding with the Muslim Azeris against the Christian Armenians, to raise the specter of the historical Christian–Muslim rivalry. More importantly, it was also because Turkey hoped that by staying out of the conflict it would avoid a confrontation with Russia. Russia, who disliked Turkey's growing influence in the region, enjoyed a close relationship with Armenia, and had consistently backed it in the Nagorno Karabakh dispute. Any active Turkish intervention on the side of the Azeris would, Ankara feared, trigger an immediate Russian response, which might take one of several forms. Russia might decide to intervene in the war and, with several military bases in Armenia, it was much better placed to come to Armenia's aid than Turkey was to assist Azerbaijan. There was also the possibility that Turkish intervention would lead to open Turkish–Russian hostilities, something Turkey was particularly keen to avoid, especially with Russian troops patrolling the Turkish–Armenian and Turkish–Georgian borders.<sup>56</sup>

In its confrontation with Azerbaijan, Yerevan was supported by Russia and Iran, both objecting to the growing power of Turkey and pan-Turkism. This strange policy of Shi'ite Iran siding with the Christian Armenian enemies of Azeri Shi'ite Muslims – Azerbaijan is 70 percent Shi'ite – is understandable

when people bear in mind the existence of a restless, nationally minded Azeri minority in Iran. Between 33 and 40 percent of the Iranians are of Azeri origin; other estimations are any number between 8 and 25 million. The existence in Baku of a strong pan-Azeri tendency for unity with the Azeris in Iran, explains the policy of Tehran. Actually, there are more ethnic Azeris living in Iran than in Azerbaijan. Iran is also the greatest exporter to Armenia, mainly food, manufactured goods and machinery, in addition to some 10 percent of Armenia's electricity demands. Iran, next to the CIS, is Armenia's biggest export market, mainly metals and building materials.<sup>57</sup>

Still, despite occupying opposite ends of the pole, politically, religiously and ideologically, and despite the fact that each threatens the other's identity, Ankara and Tehran have yet to engage in battle. Instead, the two have been content to limit themselves to exchanging, albeit very vicious, verbal and diplomatic blows, with occasional covert action. Turkey and Iran can point to the absence of any territorial controversies. Their common border has not been disputed for 400 years – one of the oldest borders in the world, demarcated in 1639 by an agreement between the Ottoman and Iranian empires. High-ranking officers from both armies who command the military units in the border area meet regularly, even in periods of tension and non-dialogue between the two states. Bilateral trade in 2001 reached 1.2 billion dollars, of which Iranian oil export to Turkey amounted to 700 million dollars.<sup>58</sup> Officially, Iran is cautious not to support the PKK, lest this arouses its own 4.5 million Kurds – 9 percent of the population – and Turkey accepts that Iranian Revolutionary Guards support the Kurdish underground or instigate Muslim radical terrorism in Turkey, not official government bodies in Tehran. It seems that fear of a crisis that would be disruptive to bilateral relations, causes Turkey to moderate its criticism against Tehran. And, as above, the different aggressive treatment Turkey assigns to Syria, smaller and weaker than Iran, demonstrates the caution she pursued with Iran – an ideological adversary and another supporter of the PKK. Risks are simply too high.

### **Turkey–Syria: crises and rapprochement**

Iran probably fits *The Economist's* view of a country Turkey would love seeing moved elsewhere.<sup>59</sup> Notwithstanding Syria becoming closer to being defined in similar words by Turkey, there has recently been a surprising development in Turkish–Syrian relations – surprising because, not long ago, Turkish newspapers were rejoicing at Damascus's calamity, announcing that “terror is in deep mourning.” This was said following the death in June 2000 of the Syrian President, Hafez al-Assad. The presence of Ahmet Sezer, Turkey's President, at the funeral did not change the mood of the Turkish media but, explained a Turkish source, “miracles do happen and Assad's death and Turkish–Syrian relations is the same as happened to Stalin:” the Soviet dictator's death in 1953, signaled a

new beginning in the superpowers' cold-war relations. Similar improvement took place between Damascus and Ankara. But before "the miracles," a different atmosphere predominated over the two countries' relations. Ankara was concerned lest Syria's peace negotiations with Israel, started in Madrid in October 1991, let alone a peace agreement, would remove Damascus from the list of nations supporting terrorism without Syria first withdrawing its assistance from the PKK.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Turkey feared that a Syrian–Israeli peace accord would make Damascus more powerful in its conflicts with Turkey: Damascus was probably interested in the peace talks with Israel to achieve the neutralization of the Israeli front. Syria could then cope successfully with its real if not existential problems – its water and territorial conflicts with Turkey. Sixty percent of the water supplied in Syria comes from the Euphrates River that originates in Turkey, and Syria strongly claims sovereignty to Alexandretta – since July 1939 the Turkish province of Hatay – persistently depicting the area as Syrian on its maps.

A major obstacle to the two countries' relations was removed in October 1998 when Abdullah Ocalan was expelled from Damascus. The bilateral trade for the year 1999 amounted to 539 million dollars – a decline from 615 million in 1998 – owing to global decrease in oil prices, in agriculture and because of a number of droughts. Syria still accounts for 1.3 percent of Turkey's total exports and 0.7 percent of total imports, i.e. third in the Middle East, after Israel and Egypt. Turkey exports synthetic materials, iron, steel, margarine, agricultural and automotive products, and imports mainly Syrian crude oil. Turkey plans to import 2 billion cubic meters of Syrian gas, but the two countries lack the finances needed to lay a gas pipeline. Ankara aims at a 1 billion dollar volume bilateral trade, and Damascus is looking for work permits for more Syrians in Turkey and for better cooperation over the water issue. Triple talks – Iraqi water experts joined Turkish and Syrian engineers – resumed recently over the Euphrates water. Ankara stresses that it gives Syria more water than Syria can handle or needs, yet is reluctant to commit itself concerning the future. "We can't guarantee that we'll be that benevolent for long," say Turkish officials. Such words do not raise optimism in Damascus, which is without water most nights. Still, a good omen for possible improved relations is Syria's readiness to alter the curriculum of Syrian schools so that the 500 years of Ottoman rule should not be regarded anymore as imperialism.

Syria suffers from a deep crisis: decline of oil prices – oil is 70 percent of Syria's exports – and of agriculture products, mainly cotton, created 12–15 percent unemployment that badly affected the Syrian stagnated economy. The 1997 Syrian GNP was less than 900 dollars per person (1,050 in 1995), and the Syrian annual population growth stood at 3.8 percent – among the highest in the Middle East – facts which do not ease economic and social strains. Interestingly, most Syrians do not have bank accounts and there is no private banking system in the country. With Syrian GDP down by 4.4 percent in 1997, GNP per person being less than 900 dollars, a sharp decline in foreign investments, in tourism, in remittances from Syrians working abroad, and in the output

of the drought-ridden agriculture, improvement of contacts with Turkey was essential.

Turkish enthusiasm indeed increased: the Under Secretary for Foreign Trade, Kursat Tuzman, announced during a visit of Turkish businessmen to Damascus that, "When Turkey becomes a full EU member, the border of the Union will start from Syria." The Syrians, no less enthusiastic, reciprocated by promising Turkish businessmen the opportunity to reach Gulf markets through Syria. Syria looks for thriving contacts with Turkey, but the most astonishing move has been the cooperation between the two armies and the conclusion of military cooperation agreements, culminating in the overt visit of the Syrian Chief of Staff to Ankara in June 2002. There was no Syrian demand for Turkey to scale down its contacts with Israel. On the other hand, there was probably a Turkish request that the Arab press would tone down its objection to the Turkish–Israeli rapprochement. A number of editors of the Arab press are of Syrian origin and it looks as if they comply with a similar request from Damascus. Furthermore, the Turkish–Syrian military contacts – for example, mutual instruction of officers in both countries military academies, exchange of intelligence pertaining to the PKK, joint military exercises, the unearthing of mines along their common border, etc. – lessen the Syrian criticism aimed against similar interaction between Ankara and Israel.<sup>61</sup>

Syria is dependent on the Euphrates' uninterrupted flow. In addition, the "pincer-like" grip which Israel and Turkey exert on it, practically makes ineffective its ability to pose a real threat to Turkey. The expulsion of Ocalan and Damascus's disassociation from the PKK – Syria thus relinquishing the only leverage it has vis-à-vis Turkey – reveal an economically and militarily weak Syrian state. Unless water stops flowing – which might then produce desperate Syrian moves – one can expect a quiet Turkish–Syrian border. It is worth noting that this actual impotence on behalf of Syria has had its implications even on Athens. A Syrian state turning powerless vis-à-vis Turkey, affected the Greek decision to stop alienating Turkey and to start a dialogue with her (see Chapter 6.)

### **The Turkic tribe: Turkey's relations with the Caucasian and Central Asian countries**

A most loaded issue – emotionally, culturally, politically, economically, and militarily – has been posed before Turkey in the 1990s: the resumption of contacts with its Caucasus and Central Asian kin. No other matter put a clearer question before the Turkish quest for identity. Ideas like pan-Turkism (*Turkculkuk*) and Turanism (*Turanalik*), which had laid dormant for years owing to the communist separation between Turkey and the "Outside Turks," or the "Captive Turks," or the "Brothers and Cousins," resurfaced. And while sincere intentions – even temptations – to deepen these contacts were high, the potential abandonment of the national Turkish way and the Western European wishes in favor of a

non-defined, large Asian-Turkic frame, is problematic. Notwithstanding emotions and hopes, it seems that there will be no Turkic union or commonwealth led by Ankara – indeed, a suggestion to establish a “Turkic Commonwealth” was officially rejected in Ankara.<sup>62</sup>

Turkey’s interests in good relations with the Caucasian and Central Asia countries seem to be obvious. Good relations with the Muslim republics, the special relations with Israel, a rapprochement with Russia – all serve as alternatives to the alienation Turkey faces in Europe. Suffice it to mention the importance of markets for Turkish goods and sources for energy needs among the producing countries around the Caspian Sea. Similarly, lessening the dependence on Arab energy by procuring oil and gas from the Central Asian markets is another incentive for good Turkish–Turkic interaction. Central Asia is of vital political and strategic importance for Ankara: it borders with Iran and Russia – two powers that want to exert their influence there, that want to resume their past hegemony, most likely on Turkey’s expense. Turkey feels close, linguistically, culturally, and ethnically, to these countries. Turk Hava Yulari, the Turkish airline, has been for years the only foreign airline that served the Central Asian republics. British Airways, KLM, El-Al and Lufthansa, to mention but few, followed suit only later. Similarly, Turkish television broadcasts to almost all major cities there.

The affinity with the Turkic world – the six ex-Soviet Muslim republics plus the Turanian peoples, approximately 155 million people – plays a major role in the Turkish search for identity. The ideas of pan-Turkism and Turanism encompass the area from Azerbaijan to Xinjiang. It talks of the recreation of brotherhood and cooperation of the Turkic world, the one that predated the Ottoman Empire. Pan-Turkists frequently spoke and wrote of a *Great Turkey*, stretching from the Mediterranean nearly to the Pacific, or from the Adriatic to the Chinese Wall – “a powerful and affluent state, with its ancient glories restored and old customs revived.”<sup>63</sup> Others, aware of the political hurdles – for instance, the expression of pan-Turkic sympathies by Ankara might antagonize the host countries of Turkic minorities – merely canvass cultural and economic features or confine themselves to a smaller region that stretches up to the Caspian Sea. One way or another, this is something that strongly attracts many in Turkey.

The political influence and power of the pan-Turkist lobby in Turkey should not be exaggerated. Gareth Winrow attributed it to the small number of Turkish citizens who are recent immigrants from Central Asia.<sup>64</sup> The threat of Turkish nationalism being swapped for something much larger is a hurdle the pan-Turkist lobbyists could hardly get over. This deprives the pan-Turkist groups of more extensive grassroots support. Also, since its inception, Kemalism tolerated cultural and economic cooperation among peoples of Turkic origin. Political unity among them – “Turanism” – something that directly contradicts the idea of Turkish nationalism of focusing only on Turks in Anatolia and on those left in Rumelia plus the Western and European notions of it, was not accepted. Turkish ideologists and politicians, among them the historian Zeki Velidi Togan (1890–1970), known for his work on the origins of Turkic clans in

Russia and Central Asia, and Alparslan Turkes (1917–97), Deputy Prime Minister in the 1970s and Member of Parliament in the 1990s, were tried, sentenced and exiled for promoting Turanism.<sup>65</sup>

It should be recalled that Turan is an undefined area in the steppes of Central Asia. Its limits were given as China in the east, Tibet, India, and Iran in the south, and the Caspian Sea in the west and north. Turanism, as clearly explained by Jacob Landau, had as its chief objective rapprochement, and ultimately union, among all peoples whose origins are purported to extend back to Turan. Pan-Turkism strives for some sort of union – cultural, or physical, or both – among all peoples of proven or alleged Turkic origins, whether living both within and without the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire, subsequently the Republic of Turkey. Turanism, thus, is a far broader concept than pan-Turkism, embracing such peoples as the Hungarians, the Finns and Estonians.<sup>66</sup>

Many Turks have viewed the Kemalist and communist imposed separation from the Turkic world as artificial, the resumption of contact as “homecoming.” As such, these attitudes challenge the uniqueness of Turkish nationalism or the European-oriented Kemalist ideology. Turkey thus faces two “pans” that challenge Kemalism and its territorial Turkish nationalism: the ethnic pan-Turkism and pan-Islam. Externally and internally, the importance for Turkey of Central Asia and its links with the Muslim Caucasian and Asian republics (Azerbaijan in the Caucasus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in Central Asia, all independent since August–December 1991) is on par with the country’s utmost and top issues. Some say that the country’s soul is at stake. Similarly, the leaderships of these republics, eager to achieve international recognition and entry into economic and financial bodies, regarded Turkey as a model state “who has made it.” A Muslim people living in a secular, Western-oriented state, has been an example that most Central Asian elites want to apply in their countries. Also, Turkey, a friend and ally of the Western countries, was perceived as an intermediary who could introduce these Asian republics to Western know-how, investment, assistance, and democracy.

Remarks made by Hikmet Cetin, Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, might add an interesting insight to our discussion. It links together EU alienation towards Turkey, anti-democracy, anti-modernism, and an implicit explanation of the increase of extreme ideas and ideologies in Turkey. Excessive Turkish nationalism, Muslim radicalism, and the search for alternatives, whether in the Caucasus, in the third world, among the Muslim peoples, etc. will affect the Turkic world as well. “Turkey’s exclusion from the EU will send a negative message to the Muslim-majority states of Central Asia, discouraging them from continuing along the path of democratization and modernization,” warned Cetin.<sup>67</sup>

Ankara reveals an interest in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan – the first for its geopolitical and military strength and importance, all the three for their oil, gas and raw materials that could be exported to Europe via Azerbaijan and the Turkish Mediterranean coast. Turkish entrepreneurs will thus gain rich contracts, a limit will be put to the number of supertankers

crossing the Bosphorus and Canakkale (Dardanelles) Straits, and apparently Turkish – not Russian – political, economic and cultural influences will prevail in these countries. As for the rest then, as noted, the Persian-speaking Tajikistan inclines toward Iran, in Kyrgyzstan priority is given to China, and in Kazakhstan Russian influence is clear.

Turkey has been instrumental in promoting regional multilateral schemes for economic, financial, scientific, technology and cultural cooperation. The idea was to promote contacts among states and peoples; some even envisioned the creation of a Turkic world commonwealth, bank and a common market. Summit conferences were convened; as it turned out Russian, *not* Turkish, was the *lingua franca* at these assemblies. Numerous meetings were held, and a plethora of correspondence and documentation were exchanged. The Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TICA) was established in 1992 to facilitate the activities of Turkish businessmen in Central Asia and to coordinate between Turkey and the Turkic states in such spheres as banking, training officials and establishing computer networks, etc. The agency helped organize the “Turkish Speaking” conferences of youth leaders, university sectors, and news agencies. The Turkish Ministry of Culture formed the Turkic Cultures and Arts Joint Administration. The Directorate of Religious Affairs of Turkey organized the Muslim leaderships of twenty-eight Turkic countries and communities, and launched the Eurasian Islamic Council Organization. None of the above has yet materialized to the extent its initiators wished. The Turkish International Cooperation Agency’s success was not great, and cooperation remained mainly at the bilateral level, on occasions solely restricted to cultural and educational matters. It was found that each of the Turkic Muslim republics was moving down a separate path. When the Turkish Ministry of Education regarded the Turkic world as homogeneous and wanted to standardize school history textbooks throughout the Turkic states, it faced opposition from the Central Asian republics: they preferred history textbooks reflecting their own particular experience.<sup>68</sup>

Existing ethnic, border and religious conflicts, regional rivalries (for instance, Uzbekistan v. Kazakhstan), uneven economic development, different expectations, conflicting interests and influences, language and bureaucratic hurdles – all detrimentally affected the establishment of a Turkic world extending from the Mediterranean to China. The aforementioned Turkish model that has not yet fully proven itself in Turkey itself – a secular, liberal democracy with a free market economy has little applicability to the Caucasus or Central Asian republics. As was shown by Gareth Winrow, high budget deficits, rising foreign debts, poor taxation systems, strongman rule, lack of free, open, and competitive elections, censorship, bureaucratic inertia, corruption, nepotism, local disputes, etc., all impair democratization, hinder the development of economic and political reforms, in short reducing to the minimum the chances of success of the so-called Turkish model. Neither language affinity eased the process or produced the expected proximity: beyond the Caspian there is little in common between local populations and Turks. The Turkish language helps in Azerbaijan and



Turkmenistan. In Kazakhstan Turks will be linguistically challenged. In Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan Turkish will be completely useless. Most of these places were never part of the Ottoman world, so there is little in the way of shared culture beyond the Caspian Sea.<sup>69</sup>

Only small amounts of monies, from the Turkish business community and Western sources, were invested in Central Asia or the Caucasus; money was assigned instead to Russia. The lack in Central Asia of proper physical and financial infrastructure and distribution channels, vital for the conduct of business, was detrimental to increasing economic relations. No wonder Ankara's trade with the Turkic peoples accounted in 1998 for not more than 3.5 percent of its exports and a mere 1 percent of its imports.

Above all, Central Asians express strong reluctance to antagonize either the large Russian communities that live within the Central Asia republics, or Moscow, who sees itself as the successor of the Soviet Union in Central Asia. Also, Iran harbors some hegemonic ambitions and it objects to manifestations of excessive Turkish influence or Turkish secularism. Caution has led the Central Asians to refrain from crowning Turkey as the new patron. The ex-Soviet Muslim republics refused to accept a new yoke, to bind themselves exclusively to Turkish leadership or to Turkic formations, only a few years after they got rid of Soviet supervision and Moscow-controlled bureaucracies. The republics seek instead to diversify their relations, rather than becoming identified with this or that model. Gareth Winrow mentions that in the euphoric days of the early 1990s, when the Turkic republics secured independence from Moscow, President Ozal had hoped to announce the creation of a Turkic Common Market and establishment of a Turkic Trade and Development Bank. As noted, nothing materialized, among other reasons because of the Turkic leaders' reluctance to secure only Turkic political and economic support, solely from within the Turkic world.<sup>70</sup>

In spite of apparent familiarity with local culture that was supposed to grant Turkish businessmen an advantage compared with their Western counterparts, Charalambos Tsardanidis points to the Turks' lack of adequate knowledge, if not ignorance, as to the real situations, differences and wishes of the peoples and republics of Central Asia. This, he says, is a result of decades of separation between Kemalist Turkey and the republics becoming communist. Thus, many Turks went to Central Asia in the 1990s with the expectation of discovering people like themselves, and were surprised to meet total strangers. All this proved stronger than the unrealistic visions of a Turkey-led Turkic world, or, as Gregory Gleason puts it, the Central Asians began to think of Turkey only as a partner, not a model, nor a leader.<sup>71</sup>

There are also good reasons that prevent Turkey from becoming too involved in these republics, especially with those with whom it has ethnic ties. Ankara was unable to provide aid to the Central Asian countries in the quantities hoped for. The 1.5 billion dollar commercial credit offered to these countries by Turkey's Eximbank for the purchase of Turkish goods and foodstuffs

and for the building of infrastructure, covered only a fraction of these countries' needs. Surprisingly, parts of the credit were not used; unsurprisingly, the borrowers often failed to make repayments. It turned out that some Turkish goods, for instance basic medical equipment, were too sophisticated to be installed in Central Asia or the Caucasus. Also, as noted, to avoid confrontation with Russia, Turkey wisely decided to refrain from interfering in the Armenian–Abzerbaijani conflict over Nagorno–Karabakh. On her part, Moscow did not conceal her objection to the sale of American F-16 fighter aircraft assembled in Turkey, to the modernization of Turkey's Black Sea navy, and to the Turkish army getting equipped with best of US armaments. It seems that the Moscow–Turkey interaction is more important to Turkey than any far-fetched and dubious pan-Turkism in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The Turks are also aware that the Central Asia leaders wish to remain part of a loose Russian security umbrella in order to check the spread of religious Muslim radicalism. Derogatory references were made to “Wahhabism” in Uzbekistan, i.e. to the puritanical brand of Islam common in Saudi Arabia. Neither are the Turkish armed forces in a position to help contain Muslim extremism emanating from Tajikistan's civil war or Afghanistan's Taliban. Russia seems more capable and ruthless.<sup>72</sup>

Turkey's decision to keep out of the cruel ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus and Central Asia – “an ethnic time-bomb,” according to Jacob Landau – has something to do with the position of the republics themselves as well. As mentioned before, having only recently been liberated from the domination by the Soviets, they could hardly be interested in exchanging it for domination by the Turks, who are equal in population to the six Muslim republics combined. By successfully removing the Soviet economic monopolies, the Muslim republics, for economic interests, are reluctant to install Turkish monopolies. They encourage, instead, the involvement of Russians and Turks together in economic and trade projects and ventures. Some of the republics find difficulties with pan-Turkism. Kazakhstan, for instance, a republic of minorities, is inclined to promote a policy of pan-Kazakhism, rather than pan-Turkism: it encourages expatriate Kazakhs to return home, in order to alter the demographic balance.<sup>73</sup>

The republics' needs are estimated in the range of 250 billion dollars. Since Russia is in no position to support them economically, the republics turn for assistance elsewhere, to places like Europe, the United States, Japan and China. However, the West, although regarded as an ideal model, is remote – culturally and geographically – and it will not invest its monies in the risky economies of Central Asia. Turkey and Iran are therefore approached to serve as a model in the solution of pressing problems. Ankara lacks the sources to provide the republics with their major economic, social or material needs, but it helps educate Central Asian diplomats, offers modest credits and financial aid, assists with plans for setting up local air companies, and has invited 10,000 Central Asian students and 4,000 military cadets to study and train in Turkey's universities and war colleges.

Ankara circulates its newspapers and publications in the Muslim republics, harboring hopes to make Turkish the *lingua franca* of the area, and as mentioned previously, helps in the Latinization of the republics' languages. Turkey also assisted in rebuilding the republics' telephone, computer, television and satellite communication systems, cut by Moscow in 1992 after the republics proclaimed their independence. Turkey is also perceived as helping the American cause in Central Asia – presenting a model of Western democracy and of “sane” Islam in contrast to Russia or Iran – and as capable of bringing US economic and financial support there. Indeed, Turkish influence in Central Asia will be more credible if in its wake Western businessmen show up.<sup>74</sup>

Turkey's dilemma, though not simple, has apparently been resolved. The continuation of Kemalism, the territorial Turkish nationalism – which rejected the ethnic unity of the Turkic peoples, i.e. pan-Turkism or the more embracing Turanism – may well result in the abandonment of the peoples of Central Asia to Russian hegemony or Iranian Shi'ism. On the other hand, a major involvement would mean giving up of the dream of the Western alternative – something Turkey's enemies in Europe and the West's enemies in Turkey would welcome. By concentrating on the nebulous and potentially dangerous Asian option, Ankara would have to relinquish that special Turkish nationalism which has been built up with so much effort over the last seventy-five years. “We are not going to build an Eastern alternative” declared President Demirel, emphasizing the direction Turkey had *no* intention of taking.<sup>75</sup> Still, frictions, alienation, exclusion, criticism, patronizing, suspension, rebukes, sanctions, etc., that too often mar Turkey's relations with the “Big West” – Europe, EU, USA, etc. – arouse the following reaction:

Turkish culture is very different from the West. Concepts such as strong family ties, respect for elders and unconditional love of and commitment to children sound like clichés in the West but form the basis of Turkish society. Loneliness is a rare phenomenon. Relationships are not based on manipulation, and the foremost motivation of individuals is not greed. The people of Turkey are enamored of foreigners, and racism seems to be distant from everyone's mind, even though the West tries to portray Turks as ogres . . . On the political side, Turkey could slowly but politely let Europe stand on the sidelines while the republic looks to itself, to its other friends and to the Turkic nations of Asia. We are culturally more akin to them than to the West, with its excessive and exploitative nature, or to the Arabs, with their strange views of women and their theocratic political systems. Turkish culture, since its origins on the steppes, has always put women on the same horse as men.<sup>76</sup>

Each of the conclusions of this quotation, presented so unequivocally, could be subject to fierce attacks, if not total refutation. Neither is the call for the “Turkicness” of Turkey as a substitute for Westernization the prevailing theme in the country. Even ardent supporters of pan-Turkism would agree that Central Asia's Tajikistan, Kirgistan, and Uzbekistan could not be Turkey's source for modernization, democracy, prosperity, etc. Neither would the country's pan-Islamists consider Yemen, Mauritania, or Bangladesh to be the wish of Turkey. They all

know very well that twenty-first century Turkey should look to the West. In addition, becoming Turkic, means becoming embroiled in the Caucasus and Central Asian interstate and ethnic conflicts, as well as arousing Russia's wrath. Hitherto, Turkey has managed to avoid this kind of excessive involvement and Kemalism, with its European, Western, and secular orientation, seems to prevail. But pan-Turkism and pan-Islam do show the alternatives, as does the too frequent European and Western alienation that creates the mindset to produce suggestions like those in the above quotation.

### General elections, 18 April 1999

Nationalism, Islam, the Turkic peoples, relations with the West, the PKK, forcing Syria to its knees – these and other issues of nation and identity aspects eventually reflected in the Turkish general elections of April 1999. Weak coalition governments shuffled in and out of office in Turkey during the 1990s. The average rate was one per year. Eleven governments, including nine coalitions, held office in Ankara during the decade. Major policy changes in Turkey were thus most unlikely, because only a strong government could undertake bold policy departures.<sup>77</sup> Erbakan's government was no exception: it ruled for less than a year. A rather unexpected coalition with Tansu Ciller, who enjoyed support from the Turkish media and business community as well as Western leaders, did not remove military pressure from the government. Morton Abramowitz's description of the Erbakan–Ciller cooperation reflected the surprise:

Turkey's political system breeds political promiscuity. Over the years . . . party leaders have jumped into bed with some strange partners. The current government is provocative even for Turkey: a 70 year old devout Muslim leading a religious party . . . [who] shares power with the female, U.S. trained leader of a center-right secular party whom many Turks believe is corrupt.<sup>78</sup>

Erbakan had to resign following Turkey's Chiefs of Staff's charges that he acted against the secular character of Turkey. His Welfare Party was later dissolved for similar accusations, and he was banned from taking part in future political activities. Ciller's shield did not help Erbakan: it turned out to be that Ciller herself cooperated with Erbakan just to stop the Welfare Party's investigations against her being allegedly involved in huge financial vice.<sup>79</sup>

Mesut Yilmaz's minority government replaced that of Erbakan. Yilmaz captured the leadership of his Motherland Party in 1991 and 1997 was in his third stint as Prime Minister (two months in 1991, three in 1996). His government consisted of the Motherland Party, of Bulent Ecevit's center-left Democratic Left Party, and defectors from the True Path Party. For its majority in parliamentary votes, the government relied on Deniz Baykal's Republican People's Party.<sup>80</sup> However, Yilmaz's government lost its parliament majority in November 1998, only seventeen months after it came to power. The reason? Although considered

“clean” among often corrupt competitors, Yilmaz found himself entangled in a similar manner to Ciller, namely, grave suspicion of silencing investigations or covering state-Mafia organized crime triangle, and personally being involved in corruption. His November 1998 fall, after seventeen months in power, brought about the transition government led by Ecevit and the elections of April 1999.

The April elections showed that the electorate found the Welfare Party and later the Virtue Muslim Party to be successful in providing running water, collecting the garbage and providing services, and consequently kept them in control of municipal administrations. The same electorate, however, did not hesitate to reflect in the ballot boxes that they were not satisfied with Muslim parties’ politics in state affairs. Radical and protest voting in 1999 did not increase Islamic power but, rather, and dramatically so, the nationalist view. The Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP), the Nationalist Action Party, became the second largest political party represented in parliament, with 18.1 percent of the vote. Ecevit’s Demokratik Sol Partisi (DSP), the Democratic Left Party, came first with 21.6 percent of the vote, the Muslim Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi or the FP) headed by Recai Kutan won 15.5 percent, Mesut Yilmaz’s Anavatan Partisi (ANAP), the Motherland Party, achieved 13.4 percent, and Tansu Ciller’s True Path Party (Dogru Yol Partisi) got 12.3 percent of the vote.

The MHP, led by Devlet Bahçeli, Ankara’s Gazi University economics professor, enjoyed the frustration and patriotic pride of the Turkish electorate. The latter felt alienated, hence highly nationalist, as a result of the EU December 1997 Luxembourg decision to defer the negotiations on Turkey’s accession into the EU; and the capture of Abdullah Ocalan, February 1999, only added to the excessive nationalist feelings. On such occasions the national or Turkic world options thrive and reflect in the ballots. Turks, sensing their growing economy and military prowess, as well as close links with the United States and Israel, and living in a country that emerges as the regional power which forces its will on its neighbors (Greece, Syria), expressed their pride in the ballots. *Hurriyet’s* Enis Berberoglu gave the following explanation of MHP’s victory: “The coffins of the soldiers martyred in the Southeast, being sent to their hometowns for burial, have obviously helped boost the MHP vote. While the DSP and the FP received votes by inspiring hope, the MHP has received votes by demanding ‘Let us hang APO [Abdullah Ocalan]’”<sup>81</sup> It should be mentioned that the same MHP had failed to enter parliament in the general elections of 1995 because it could not pass the 10 percent threshold. The MHP election triumph was doubly important because the party had undergone serious internal upheaval following the death of its legendary leader, Alparslan Türkeş.

Ecevit’s DSP was also seen as a nationalist force because of the party’s and its leader’s positions on specific issues – support for Turkish Cyprus, strong opposition to the PKK, to Kurdish nationalism, the capture of Abdullah Ocalan, and so on. The party’s support of the “Turkey First” approach (“Turkey First” has been a vague expression for the 1990s tendency to pursue a more active place for Turkey in regional and world affairs, a status that should match the country’s

importance and achievements) had also granted it a nationalist tone. The MHP's nationalism is more all-embracing – romantic, ideological, and ethnically based, with an emphasis on the wider “Turkish Nation,” the pan-Turkish world comprising Turkey and the Turkic peoples, and Turkic parts of the former Soviet Union, of Cyprus, of the Balkans, and the Turkomans in the Middle East. All this is an “indispensable part of Turkey’s national interests,” according to the MHP’s election program. In order to achieve these ambitious objectives, the MHP found it necessary to establish a “Ministry of the Turkish World,” and to set up a “Common Market of the Turkish World.”<sup>82</sup>

Following the general elections of April 1999, Bulent Ecevit, Prime Minister for the fifth time, found, together with Bahçeli’s MHP and Yılmaz’s Motherland Party, a common national ground and formed a coalition government. Ecevit had to choose between Ciller and Yılmaz. The two – both leading center-right parties but lacking any real ideology difference, hence vying for the same electorate, hence the extreme personal hatred that they feel towards each other – had to separate. Ciller went to the opposition, together with the Muslim Virtue Party. This was not an exception: Turkish politics is often explained more by personal likes and hatreds than by differences of substance or ideology.

Forming the fifty-seventh government of the Republic of Turkey – there were six governments in Turkey during the previous five years – the three-party coalition seemed to have introduced a measure of political and economic stability. The election to the presidency of Ahmet Necdet Sezer, the Constitutional Court Chief Justice (May 2000), raised hopes for further democratization, respect for human rights, and corruption-free government. The capture of Ocalan and, in practice, the ending of the fifteen-year war with the PKK, were expected to help in the fight against inflation, to ease the privatizing of various sectors of the Turkish economy, and in attracting foreign investment. To improve the chances of economic stability, Turkey won the confidence of the International Monetary Fund and other financial bodies and received multibillion dollar loans to sustain its monetary system.

Ecevit’s government has also intended to toughen Turkey’s foreign policy and strengthen its military. The fact that Turkey was left with only one conflict and with only Greece as an adversary – precisely because of this solitude Athens opted for negotiations with Turkey (see Chapter 7) – could be attributed to Ankara’s unyielding military deterrence and its prudent foreign policy. No doubt the end of the Turkish–PKK war and Ankara desisting from the implementation of the death penalty on Abdullah Ocalan, eased the EU decision to invite Turkey to join its ranks.

## Notes

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- 16 Resat Kasaba and Sibel Bozdogan, "Turkey at the Crossroad," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Autumn 2000, pp. 1–20; Nulifer Gole, quoted in Jolyon Naegele, "Turkey: Military Upholds Secularist Tradition," *MERIA Seminar: REF/RL Magazine: Turkey Military Upholds Secularist Tradition*, 5 August 1998.
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- 20 M. Hakan Yavuz, "Cleansing Islam from the Public Sphere," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Autumn 2000, pp. 21–42, 39; Kasaba and Bozdogan, "Turkey at the Crossroad," p. 17; Stephen Kinzer, *New York Times*, 17 January 1998.
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# 5

## International encounters

### **Turkey's relations with Russia**

Past history and present interests combined to transform Turkey's relationship with Russia at the end of the twentieth century into a complex affair fraught with contradiction. The lengthy, intricate, conflict-ridden rivalry between the Ottoman and Russian empires, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and between the Soviet Union and Turkey, in the twentieth, had left its mark on the relationship between modern-day Turkey and post-communist Russia. The two countries feared yet respected each other. Acknowledging each other's power and recognizing the value of working in tandem, they, at the same time, immensely mistrusted each other, so that all their dealings were marked by extreme caution and wariness. In the 1990s, these ambiguities surfaced as joint Russian–Turkish commercial and military interests vied with bitter regional and economic rivalry. As a result, the two countries' relationship was defined by close, if wary, cooperation, commingled with uncommonly competitive unilateral steps specifically designed to undermine their rival's interests, though again, without ever quite pushing matters to the brink.

### **Turkey, Russia, and the Central Asian and Caucasus Republics**

Centuries of tension and friction, interleaved with the occasional crisis, had taught Turkey to tread very gingerly where Russia was concerned. Ankara was well aware that the successful pursuit of its regional interests demanded, in the present, as much discretion and circumspection vis-à-vis Russia as it had in the past. This was particularly true in Central Asia and the Caucasus, where, as already noted, Turkey's desire to keep its relations with Russia on an even keel acted as a constant constraint on its policies, and was one of the reasons it

failed to become the dominant power in the region. Russia, though forced to surrender its Asian empire, following the Soviet Union's disintegration, did not abandon its interest in the area. For one thing, Moscow could not afford to ignore any strategic, economic or even religious developments, in what it termed its "near abroad," that might spill over and have a negative effect on Russia. For another, Moscow still harbored hegemonic ambitions in the region. On both counts the Russians were determined to maintain, and, if possible, extend their influence in both Central Asia and the Caucasus.<sup>1</sup>

Though no longer legally or physically in control of Central Asia and the Caucasus, Russia still made its presence felt throughout the region. Economically, the Republics, in the 1990s were only slightly less dependent on Moscow than they had been in the days of the Soviet Union. The closed and highly centralized economic system, which Moscow had imposed on the Republics and, which had been designed primarily to serve its interests, remained largely intact. For years, the Soviet Union had treated Central Asia and the Caucasus as its own private and endless source of cheap raw materials and agricultural produce. In order to protect this economic treasure trove, the Soviet Union made sure that other than devoting some resources to the excavation of their natural wealth, the Republics' economies remained almost wholly agricultural. There was very little if any investment in manufacturing, so that the Republics possessed virtually no industrial, and certainly no modern industrial, infrastructures. Thus, for example, while the Republics accounted for 90 percent of the Soviet Union's raw cotton production, 93 percent of the cotton was processed elsewhere. Even in such factories as existed, the technicians, engineers, administrators, and even assembly-line workers were mostly Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians, the locals, as a rule, being barred from such highly sensitive jobs. The result of all this was, as the Soviets indeed intended, that the Republics, industrially and technologically backward, became totally subservient to Moscow. And, as it was impossible to dismantle such a highly dependent economic system overnight, they remained so well into the 1990s. It was equally unrealistic to expect the Republics to metamorphose instantly from an undeveloped agricultural community to sophisticated industrial one. By the end of the twentieth century, the Republics, independent or not, were, much to their chagrin, still reliant economically on Moscow.<sup>2</sup>

It was more or less the same story in the military domain. In the past, Moscow, responsible for the region's security, had provided the Republics with both troops and weapons for their defense. In the 1990s, the Republics, anxious to assert their independence, began to build their own armies. But, with few experienced army personnel and practically no military infrastructures or industry of their own, this proved a formidable challenge. Unable to tackle it successfully on their own, they were forced to turn to Russia for help. They asked for weapons and military equipment, as well as technical assistance, military training, and tactical and strategic instruction. As a rule, officers in the Republics' armies were Russians, not locals. Moreover, with their armies still

largely in the embryonic stage, the Republics had to rely on the Russian armed forces to defend them, or to deter any significant threat to the region, such as that posed by radical Islamic militants. Russia was quite happy to assist. By sending military advisers, equipment and, when necessary, troops, to the Republics it was able to cement its military hold on the region. In fact, it was even suspected that Russia deliberately fomented unrest in the Caucasus in order to maintain troops in the area and guarantee its regional military predominance.<sup>3</sup>

Politically, too, Russia's presence was still felt throughout the Republics. Ever since the 1920s the Soviet Union had kept the Republics on a tight political leash. It sent its own people to the area to ensure that the Republics complied. Taking no chances, it filled the ranks of the Republics' political, economic, administrative, even cultural elite, with Party members. The Republics' declaration of independence, in 1991, produced no equivalent revolution within their ruling establishment. Central Asia's leaders, many of whom were ex-Politburo bosses, were all Soviet-educated, Moscow-orientated men. The Republics' political systems, bureaucracies and academia were still packed with men and women imbued with the old Soviet traditions and practices. While many of these people genuinely wanted to turn their back on the past and their links with Moscow, old ways die hard and the Republics were, in many ways, reminiscent of mini Soviet Unions. There is a hope that, thanks to the growing number of Central Asian students studying abroad and absorbing Western values and democratic practices, the Republics may one day boast a new reformist elite. But, until then, it is the old Soviet guard that rules the roost, often with an iron fist.<sup>4</sup>

Determined to maintain its grip on the Republics and if possible regain its hegemonic position in the region, Russia was prepared to fight off all other contenders to the title. It warned Turkey that any attempt on its part to promote pan-Turkism in Central Asia and the Caucasus or to draw the region into its orbit and away from Moscow's, would be met by a Russian pan-Slavic offensive in the Christian Orthodox areas of the Balkans and Central Asia. It was a powerful threat, which Turkey could ill afford to ignore, unless, of course, it wanted to find itself embroiled in an ethnic and religious Turkic-Slavic struggle, which it most certainly did not. It had no desire to raise against it or against any of its fellow ethnic communities the wrath of the entire Christian Orthodox world. The last thing Ankara wanted was to see the Turkish and Turkic minorities in the Balkans and Central Asia, who were often discriminated against anyway, fall victim to even greater persecution. Aware of the ethnic powder keg these regions constituted, it had little stomach for the resumption of the vicious racial-religious wars, which had devastated whole communities, with Serb set against Bosnian and Albanian against Serb. If Turkey had any doubts, which it did not, that Russia meant what it said, it only had to look to Bulgaria's brutally discriminatory policies vis-à-vis its 1.5 million strong Turkish minority and Russia's and Armenia's ruthless suppression of their respective Chechen and Azeri minorities. With both countries enjoying close links with Russia, Ankara

was convinced that their actions were a sign of things to come if it insisted on playing the pan-Turkic card, contrary to Moscow's warnings.

Pursuing the Pan-Turkic theme, Moscow hinted that any bid on Turkey's part to encourage the Russian Federation's Muslim Turkic minorities to secede, would be countered by a Russian endorsement of the secessionist efforts of Turkey's minorities, the Kurds in particular. With Moscow's backing, Turkey's minorities stood a good chance of making Ankara's life even more difficult than it already was, or, worse, succeeding in their endeavors.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, Turkey could not brush aside this barefaced threat to its territorial integrity. Add to this, Russia's extensive military presence along the Armenian–Turkish and Georgian–Turkish borders and it is easy to see why Turkey was very careful not to do anything that might excite Russian suspicions. In 1999–2000, despite having saluted the Chechens' efforts to shake off the yoke of Russia's "cruel colonial imperialism," which, it emphasized bore absolutely no resemblance to the "terror motivated" Kurdish insurrection, Turkey failed to intervene in the Chechen war of independence.<sup>6</sup> Much to the exasperation of its own Turkic ethnic lobbies, Ankara, insisting that the matter was an internal Russian affair, did nothing to stop Moscow brutally reasserting its control over Chechnya. Moreover, anxious not to provoke Moscow unduly, it pointedly ignored the devastation and mass carnage Moscow spread in the course of the fighting, its sole reference to the matter being to lament the terrible humanitarian tragedy caused by war in general. In like manner, in fear that Russia might draw a parallel between the Kosovar's Muslim Albanians' national rights and those of Turkey's own minorities, thus stirring up the Kurds and Armenians in Asia Minor, Ankara did not back the Kosovar's Albanians' efforts to secede from Serbia, another Russian regional protégé.

### **Energy resources: gas and oil**

Questions of fuel and energy featured at the top of both Russia's and Turkey's agenda. Their relationship in this respect, combining the Turkey's lack of sufficient oil and gas resources, Russia's frantic need for money, as well as the desire of both to monopolize Central Asia's and the Caucasus' energy market, was a typical example of how the two countries often veered from close cooperation to fierce competition. Throughout the 1990s, Turkey imported most of its gas from Russia who, with 49 trillion cubic meters of gas, possessed the largest gas reserves in the world. In 1997, having decided to reduce its dependence on oil, Turkey signed an agreement with Russia for the purchase of 16 billion cubic meters of gas a year. This was meant to cover 50 percent of Turkey's estimated gas needs, as well as help it overcome any possible future gas shortages. With demand for gas set to rise from 12 billion cubic meters, in 1999, to 42 billion cubic meters, in 2005, Turkey faced the prospect of severe gas shortages and needed all the gas as it could get.

It was no coincidence that the Russian gas agreement was signed more or less at the same time as the EU, once again, rejected Turkey's membership application. Aggrieved and alienated by Europe's decision, Ankara pointedly set about improving its relations with Russia. But, despite its many advantages, the Russian gas deal also possessed several significant drawbacks. First, it was dependent on the execution of an immensely ambitious and complicated engineering project. The agreement, known as "Operation Blue Stream" involved two stages. During the first stage, the existing gas pipeline between Russia and Turkey was to be expanded to double its current capacity. During the second stage, a 1213 km long, 2100 meter deep pipe – the deepest in the world – was to be laid under the Black Sea, carrying Siberian gas to Turkey's Black Sea port of Samson and from there to Ankara. The pipeline, to be built by an international consortium of French, Italian, Japanese and Russian energy companies, at the cost of 3.2 billion dollars, was to be completed by 2010.<sup>7</sup> Small wonder its opponents ridiculed the entire scheme, labeling it derisively, "Operation Blue Dream." Second, while reducing Turkey reliance on oil, it increased Turkey's dependence on Russian gas. Turkey already imported 68 percent of its gas from Russia. In 1999 it was importing 7 billion cubic meters of gas from Russia as compared to only 5 billion from Algeria and Nigeria, its other two primary gas sources. This was far too much. Not wanting to become totally dependent on Moscow, which in light of the various areas of conflict between them, was simply too dangerous, Turkey began looking for other gas suppliers. Hence the 1996 Iranian–Turkish gas deal, followed by the 1999 Turkmeni gas agreement. Turkey also decided to diversify its energy resources, buying more electricity from its immediate neighbors. However, Blue Stream threatened to rival and undercut Turkey's other regional energy projects, such as the Turkmeni gas deal, with Turkey having to choose between financing Operation Blue Stream or the Turkmeni gas project, a hard choice given the advantages of both.<sup>8</sup> Blue Stream also presented a potential challenge to the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline, about which more later.

There were few things that Turkey would have liked more than to end Russia's monopoly over Central Asia's and the Caucasus' fuel market. Once they were able to extract and transport their gas and oil resources without Russia's help, the Republics would not only become more independent economically, and therefore politically, but also better equipped to fulfill one of their primary functions, as Turkey sees it, and form a buffer zone between it and Russia.<sup>9</sup> Better still they would be free to draw closer to Turkey. Abolishing the Russian fuel monopoly would also, and no less importantly, allow Turkey to exploit the Republics' energy resources itself. In the 1990s, Turkey, as noted, needed all the oil and gas it could get, and, given that it was determined not to become dependent on a single supplier, from as many sources as possible. The fuel-rich Republics offered a solution to both problems. They were also a potential money-spinner and could provide Turkey, if it played its cards right, with a handsome source of income. Hence, Ankara encouraged the Republics to

embark upon various energy projects independently of Russia, ideally in cooperation with Turkey itself. The only problem was Russia, who seeing things differently, was determined to maintain its hold on the Republics' fuel market, and who, with a head start in the regional energy game, could and did spoil many a Turkey-inspired deal.

In 2000, Russia and Turkmenistan closed a deal allowing Russia to buy 40 billion cubic meters of gas a year from Turkmenistan. The agreement, immediately set alarm bells ringing in Ankara. For one thing, it entrenched Russia's presence in the region. For another, it posed a threat to Turkey's own arrangements with Turkmenistan, in that there was the distinct possibility, or so Turkey feared, that there would not be enough gas left over for Turkey to transport to Europe, as posited in the Turkmeni–Turkish agreement. Turkey had no doubt that this was precisely Russia's intention. Hoping to corner the European gas market itself, and aware that "the next stage of our Turkmeni gas project is the sale to Europe," Russia, Cumhuriyet, Turkey's Energy and Natural Resources Minister protested, "is trying to block us."<sup>10</sup>

But two could play at that game. In 1997, Turkey set in motion a plan to build a pipeline to transport Azeri oil through Georgia to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan and hence to Europe, by passing Russia altogether. In an effort to promote the project, known as the Baku–Tiblisi–Ceyhan route, Turkey boasted that the Ceyhan port's loading facilities were vastly superior to those of the Russian port of Novorossiysk, which until now had a virtual monopoly over the transport of Central Asian oil to Europe. It also made public Russia's habit of diluting high-grade Azerbaijani light oil with inferior, sulphurous Russian crude. Turkey, on the other hand, could guarantee to supply Europe with prime unadulterated Azeri oil. One of the Baku–Tiblisi–Ceyhan route's many advantages was that, once operational, it would end Russia's monopoly over the transport of Central Asian oil. Another was that it would reduce maritime traffic, in the hugely congested Straits.<sup>11</sup>

## The Straits

The 28 km long Bosphorus Strait (Strait of Istanbul) and 70 km long Dardanelles Strait (Strait of Canakkale) linked by the Sea of Marmara, is one of the busiest waterways in the world. Three times more ships pass through the Bosphorus each year than through the Suez Canal and four times more than through the Panama Canal. Traffic in the Straits even outstrips traffic in the Straits of Hormuz, commonly held to be the most crowded in the world. In 1996, a total of 49,952 and 36,198 vessels sailed through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, respectively. In 1997, some 50,000 ships traversed the Straits, including sixty warships, 4,500 oil tankers, and a large number of merchant ships and leisure cruisers. This is in addition to the 1,500 intercity ferries and shuttles which sail back and forth between the eastern and western sides of Istanbul each day, carrying some of the



500,000 people who cross the city, either by bridge or boat. Then there are the vast number of fishing boats, which ply their trade across the Sea of Marmara. Unfortunately for Turkey, far from being static, these numbers grew by leaps and bounds. Since 1960, the total number of foreign vessels passing through the Straits has increased by 150 percent, their tonnage by 400 percent.<sup>12</sup> During the 1990s, traffic in the Straits grew at an alarming rate of 15 to 20 percent per annum, so that by the early 2000s the number of ferries crossing the Sea of Marmara is expected to reach an impossible 2,000 a day.<sup>13</sup>

Oil tankers account for a large percentage of the Straits' traffic. In 1996 alone, 4,248 oil tankers passed through the Bosphorus and 5,657 through the Dardanelles. Ten to fifteen supertankers, one or two of them exceeding 210 meters in length, cross the 700 yards wide Straits daily, carrying on board a variety of extremely hazardous substances, including crude oil, liquid gas chemicals, pesticides and herbicides. These ships are so big and their cargo so dangerous that Turkey is forced to close waterway to all other ships, until they complete their two-hour long journey through the Straits. The result is a huge backlog and even bigger bottlenecks than usual. With the number of big tankers expected to rise, Turkish officials have warned that the Bosphorus would eventually have to be closed four times a day, creating even greater delays and worse congestion.<sup>14</sup>

The Bosphorus and Dardanelles are not only the busiest straits in the world, they are also among the most difficult to navigate. Crossing the labyrinth-like Bosphorus is a highly skilled and chancy business. Full of twists and turns, ships are forced to change course at least twelve times, four times at an angle greater than 45 degrees, as they wend their way through the waterway. To make matters worse, the Bosphorus possess few shallows or sandbars, upon which ships in trouble can ground themselves before smashing into the shore. As a result, more than one ship, having lost its bearings, found itself crashing into houses built along the strait's shore, leading to sardonic comments about "the limits of Turkish hospitality."<sup>15</sup> The Dardanelles, which boasts six sharp turns, some requiring ships to alter their course abruptly at an 80 degree angle, are no better. At two points, Kandilli and Yenikoy, the ships' navigators, unable to see either the ship's port or starboard side, are forced to steer by a combination of skill and blind luck. Add to this the fact that the entire waterway suffers from bad weather, fog and unpredictable currents, and navigational risks increase tenfold. For example, if in normal times, the north to south current from the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara, is something between 3 to 4 knots, in rough weather it increases to a frightening 6 to 7 knots. As if that was not enough, the Straits also incline at a 20 degree angle north to south, which combined with the fairly rapid currents, transform any journey down the Straits into something reminiscent of a luge.<sup>16</sup>

The combination of heavy traffic, the difficulties of maneuvering through the Straits, and the often dangerous cargo on board many of the ships, is an explosive one. Between 1983 and 1993, there were 167 large-scale accidents in the Straits, all with appalling physical and environmental consequences. During the 1990s, over 150 accidents took place in the Straits. In 1992, a Lebanese vessel

carrying 13,000 sheep and goats went down in the Bosphorus. Old, decrepit and uninsured, the ship was not considered worth salvaging, and was left, together with its cargo, to rot on the bottom of the sea. Accidents involving oil tankers have proven particularly nasty. In 1997, the oil tanker *Nassia*, carrying 19 million gallons of oil went up in flames and began drifting perilously close to the Bosphorus's European shore. It took the Turkish authorities seven days before they managed to tow the burning wreck out into the Black Sea and so avoid a colossal disaster. As it was, maritime traffic in the Straits was interrupted for an entire week, causing huge delays and thus increasing the odds on further accidents happening. In the midst of all this, the *Turkish Daily News* suggested, sarcastically, that someone should "try that in the middle of New York City or any major American or European port city."<sup>17</sup>

Nor was that the end of it. In December 1997, a Norwegian tanker heading towards Western Europe, with 30,000 tons of Russian crude on board, narrowly missed one of the Bosphorus's twin bridges. In August 1998, a Greek tanker carrying 87,000 tons of crude oil ran aground, forcing the Turkish authorities, yet again, to close the Straits. In October that year, a Turkish oil tanker collided with a water tanker. Luckily, in all these cases the oil in the ships' hold did not spill overboard.<sup>18</sup> Even more fortunately, no supertankers have, so far, been involved in a fatal accident in the Straits. The devastation caused by a supertanker explosion would equal that produced by an earthquake measuring 11 on the Richter scale. It would also set off a succession of maritime accidents in the Straits, wreaking unspeakable havoc on the densely populated shores of the Sea of Marmara, and utterly destroying the Straits ecosystems.<sup>19</sup> But, it did not take an accident to ravage the Straits' marine ecology. Heavy traffic and the increasing amounts of human and industrial waste pouring into the Straits have terminally damaged much of the waterway's plant and animal life. According to environmentalists, for example, out of the 160 fish species indigenous to the Straits only twenty-six still survive.<sup>20</sup>

The discovery, in the 1990s, of oil in the Caspian basin meant, or so Turkey feared, that the situation in the Straits would go from bad to worse. By the end of the 1990s, oil tanker traffic from the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk to the Straits had doubled in number. Add to that the transport of another estimated 80 or 100 million tons of Caspian oil a year and, by 2010, the number of ships passing through the Straits would triple, or more. With the odds on the Straits' marine life suffering irreversible damage or some catastrophic accident taking place rising daily, Turkey, insisting that the Straits have only finite shipping capacity, took steps to monitor and reduce traffic in the waterway. To this end, it unilaterally modified the 1936 Montreux Straits Convention, which until then had regulated shipping through the Straits. Under the Convention, Turkey had no right to impose restrictions on vessels using the Straits. It could not, as is the case in the Panama Canal, require ships, regardless of whether they were small boats or supertankers, carrying dangerous cargo or not, hire specially trained pilots to steer them through the Straits. As a result, only 40 percent of all large

ships navigating the Straits bothered with the expense of hiring skilled pilots. Unfortunately, these were usually the ships in the worst condition, and, which, if they ran aground, would cause the greatest amount of damage. Yet, despite the fact that most of the serious accidents in the Straits involved ships without pilots, under the Convention there was nothing Turkey could do. It could not even reduce the risks by ordering ships to install basic safety features, such as a double hull. Nor could it oblige them to carry insurance, which would at least cover the cost of any damage they caused. Worse, still, given that passage through the Straits was toll free, it fell to Turkey to pay for any damage done as well as to pay for the upkeep of the Straits.<sup>21</sup>

It was an intolerable situation, which, in light of current maritime trends, would only deteriorate further. Arguing that shipping conditions had changed radically since in 1936 rendering the signing of the Montreux Convention obsolete – for example, whereas in 1936 approximately two ships crossed the Straits each day, by 1990s an average of 134 ships passed through the Straits daily; similarly, in 1936 the average oil tanker measured 40 meters, but by the late 1990s a typical oil tanker was 350 meters long; and in 1936 Istanbul's population was 1 million, but by the end of the twentieth century it was 12 million, all of which meant that the odds on an accident happening were far greater and its consequences far graver<sup>22</sup> – Turkey began unilaterally to revise the rules regulating traffic through the Straits. In June 1994, it introduced the Bosphorus and Canakkale Safety of Passage Act, which imposed various restrictions on ships sailing through the Straits, especially those carrying oil and other flammable materials. According to the Act and its various subsequent amendments, all vessels passing through the Straits must be fully insured. Ships over 300 meters long could enter the Straits only after they had received the Turkish maritime authorities' permission. No ship above 190 feet in height was allowed to cross the Straits as there was every chance that they would crash into one of the two suspension bridges spanning the Bosphorus, north of Istanbul. These new rules restricted oil supertanker traffic in the Straits. But, even ordinary oil tankers were affected by the new regulations. Henceforth only double-hulled tankers, of whatever length, would be allowed across the Straits. All dangerous cargo must be declared and Turkey reserved the right to conduct spot checks, as well as to inspect the ships' safety facilities. The number of tankers and quantity of oil crossing the Straits at any one time was, henceforth, severely restricted. Oil tankers were not allowed to queue-jump any more. All ships were limited to a speed of 10 knots and overtaking was absolutely forbidden. Finally, Turkey had the right to close the Straits, during fire-fighting and rescue operations, during anti-pollution operations, when taking soundings, while carrying out scientific research, and even during sporting events.<sup>23</sup>

Still not satisfied, Turkey periodically imposed new restrictions on shipping passing through the Straits. It also installed several new and very expensive traffic management systems in the waterway. The cost of building and running these systems, and any other schemes Turkey might come up with in the future,

was to be born by the ships themselves, which would, henceforth have to pay a special levy to cross the Straits, a particularly high one in the case of oil tankers ferrying oil from the Russian port of Novorossiysk to Europe. Not surprisingly, the majority of Straits users strongly objected to the new regime. Foremost among the protesters was Russia, who was particularly hard hit by Turkey's unilateral actions. Russian trade relied heavily on the Straits and almost a third of the ships crossing the Straits flew the Russian flag. Tightening the rules of passage and forcing Russia to pay for the privilege of crossing the Straits as well, meant fewer ships, less trade and a significantly smaller income. It would also discourage foreign entrepreneurs from investing in Russia, thus reducing even further the country's chances of economic recovery.

Russia suspected that Turkey deliberately sought to reduce, if not completely stymie Russian shipping through the Straits in order to increase the odds on the materialization of its Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan scheme. It claimed that Turkey's environmental concerns were entirely feigned, and like its constant harping on the dangers arising from the growing number of ships navigating the Straits – according to Russia there is no limit on the number of ships that can safely cross the Straits at any one time – was meant simply to promote the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline, at Russia's expense. Russia also, and somewhat contradictorily, while insisting that the Straits Act was totally unnecessary, accused Turkey of failing to improve safety standards in the Straits in the hope that future accidents will put yet another obstacle in the way of the Novorossiysk route. But, with the profits on the transport of 80–100 millions tons of oil at stake, Russia, not surprisingly, felt that it had to muster every argument it could, contradictory or not. Nor were Russia's accusations entirely spurious. While Turkey's environmental and other concerns were very real, the bonus effect of the Straits Act in terms of promoting the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan route did not escape Ankara's eye. There is little doubt that as far as Turkey was concerned, the new Straits regime served the dual purpose, of, on the one hand, making the Straits a safer place, and, on the other, advancing Turkey's fuel policies. As for the latter it remains to be seen whether the new shipping restrictions in the Straits will indeed advance the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan project at Russia's cost.

### **Common interests: civil and military trade**

In as much as Turkey would have liked to have undercut, even expropriate, Russia's monopoly over Central Asia's and the Caucasus' oil, it could not afford – even for such high stakes – to alienate Russia completely by pushing matters too far. Not only was Russia too big and too dangerous to provoke, and Turkey loath to endanger its supply of Russian gas, but there were also several other important military and economic interests at stake. Throughout the 1990s, Turkey and Russia enjoyed an extremely profitable commercial relationship, which, to a degree, tempered their political and strategic rivalry. Turkish trade

with Moscow had flourished during the 1990s, and, though, by 1999, Russia was no longer the commercial gold mine it had been, owing to the demise of the lucrative suitcase economy, the CIS still accounted for 9 percent of Turkey's overall imports – well ahead of the United States and the Middle East – and 5.6 percent of its exports.<sup>24</sup> This was not something Turkey would give up lightly. Nor was it all a one-way street. As Russia's principal trading partner in the Middle East, Turkey helped shore up Russia's faltering economy and Russia had every reason to try and expand its commercial links with Ankara even further. Accordingly, throughout the 1990s, Turkey and Russia signed many trade deals and were continuously negotiating new ones. Their aim was that by 2010 bilateral trade between them should reach the sum of 10 to 12 billion dollars a year, making Turkey one of Russia's biggest trading partners, second only to Germany, currently Moscow's chief trading partner. It was an attractive prospect and provided both countries with a strong financial incentive to keep their relations on an even keel.<sup>25</sup>

In 1993, Russian–Turkish trade took on a new dimension, as Ankara began to purchase weapons from Moscow. The West's reluctance to sell Turkey arms for fear that they might be used against the Kurds and its, to Turkey, irritating habit of threatening to deny Turkey weapons in order to, as Ankara sees it, blackmail it into improving its human rights performance, forced the Turks to look for other more reliable, less fastidious arms suppliers. Russia was the obvious choice, and Turkey in urgent need of arms, had few qualms in buying them from NATO's principal ex-enemy. Moscow, in turn, desperate for money, was only happy to oblige. Thus, Turkey became the first NATO country to purchase, on a regular basis, a wide range of Russian military equipment including helicopters, armored personnel carriers, and air defense systems. It, naturally, did not want to do anything to jeopardize this welcome and relatively secure source of weapons.<sup>26</sup>

While Turkey's relationship with Russia, during the 1990s was often distinguished by rivalry, especially in Central Asia, open conflict with Moscow was never an option. For one thing, Turkey's basic westward orientation meant that it was simply not worth its while to contest Russia's bid for the mastery of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Especially not in view of Russia's determination to retain its hold over its former Asian empire and its ability severely to bruise Turkey, if not worse, should Ankara be foolish enough to push Moscow to the brink.<sup>27</sup> For another, Turkey had too many other more pressing problems and conflicts to deal with. What with Syria, Iraq and Iran to the east and Greece to the west, Turkey had quite enough on its hands as it was, and had no need to make its life even more complicated by adding Russia to its list of enemies. Admittedly, some of these conflicts were quiescent, while others were in the process of being resolved in Turkey's favor, still it would have been, as Ankara well knew, foolhardy of it deliberately to go looking for trouble, especially with Russia. The Turkish tradition of avoiding, where possible, unnecessary conflicts also helped temper Ankara's policies towards Russia. It was for a combination of these reasons that Turkey refused to act as the local representative of Western

interests in Central Asia. If the West, and especially the United States, wanted to restrict Russia's political or economic hegemony in the region, then, Turkey believed, it should do something about it itself and not expect Turkey to fight its battle for it. Again, for Turkey, who looks westwards, it seems pointless to struggle with the Russians over mastery in Central Asia.

### **A new cold war: the battle for Central Asia's energy resources**

Central Asia and the Caucasus' huge oil and natural gas reserves are an immensely valuable economic prize, well worth fighting over. The known Caspian Sea oil reserves, some 15 to 29 billion barrels, are equal to those of the North Sea. Early soundings, however, indicated that the real amount was much greater, perhaps as much as 163–200 billion barrels of oil, which was roughly a quarter of the Middle East's oil reserves. The region's gas reserves stood at 10 trillion cubic meters, or 12 percent of the world's gas reserves, and were equal to 160 billion barrels of oil.<sup>28</sup> Small wonder that during the 1990s this gargantuan well of fuel was the subject of intense international competition. Turkey, one of the participants in the battle over the regions' energy resources, became one of the key players in the Central Asian fuel market. With its ever-growing energy needs, Turkey required the region's oil and gas for its own consumption. In order to jump the queue and convince the Republics to sell their fuel to Turkey first, Ismail Cem called their attention to the fact that not only did Turkey require and would continue to require vast amounts of oil and gas in the future, but that it was "the only country that can pay cash, pay it now and continue to pay it up front."<sup>29</sup> By posing as a dependable, highly profitable and long-term customer, Turkey was able to obtain a 49 percent interest in an international consortium that had the right to explore Aktau in Kazakhstan's gas reserves. Turkey also hoped to make some money by transporting and distributing Caspian oil to Europe by means of the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline. The pipeline would also, as noted, relieve traffic congestion in the Straits, by offering an alternative to the Novorossiysk route; congestion, which, Turkey feared would only get worse once Russia's mega-tankers began to transport Caspian oil as well. In order to promote the project Turkey capitalized on the fact that, situated halfway between East and West, it was, as it pointed out to all concerned, the ideal distribution point for Central Asian oil and gas.<sup>30</sup>

While Russia, which wanted to exploit the region's oil and gas resources itself, might contest Turkey's claims and try to frustrate its plans, the United States chose to ally itself with Turkey in the battle over the region's energy resources. During the 1990s, with its own oil reserves dwindling daily, the United States became increasingly dependent on oil imports, and oil from Venezuela, Mexico and the Persian Gulf soon accounted for 50 percent of American oil consumption. By 2010, this figure is expected to rise to 60 percent.<sup>31</sup> The United States, having learnt the lessons of the 1970s oil crisis well, was determined that

its “economy will never again be held hostage” to a single oil supplier. Accordingly like Turkey, it sought to diversify its fuel suppliers. Likewise, and for much the same reasons, it hoped to establish multiple routes for the transport of oil, so that Iran, for example, could not blackmail the United States by blocking or threatening to block American oil supplies.<sup>32</sup> But, as a global superpower, the United States also looked beyond its specific energy requirements. With global oil consumption expected to grow by an average of 2 percent a year, by 2015 the world’s energy consumption, standing at 104 million barrels a day, would be 55 percent higher than it was in 1995.<sup>33</sup> Not wishing to deplete the world’s existing resources, or give any current oil producer too much economic and political power, the United States encouraged the advent of as many new alternative energy providers as it could. The addition of “new players,” would also, the United States believed, “make energy markets more competitive, transparent and market sensitive, three perquisites of an efficient and smoothly functioning world energy sector.” In other words it would keep fuel prices low. This was certainly true of Caspian crude, which cost only 5 dollars per barrel to produce, more than Saudi Arabia’s rock bottom operating costs of 1.5 dollars per barrel, but less than the North Seas 13 dollars.<sup>34</sup> Inevitably perhaps, plain profit also played its part in exciting the United States’ interest in Caspian oil, with American oil companies hoping to obtain a large chunk of the highly lucrative Caspian Basin oil business.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Azerbaijan International Operating Company “Contract of the Century”**

Azerbaijan was lucky enough to own a significant proportion of the Caspian basin’s oil reserves. In 1997, Azerbaijan’s known oil reserves were 17 billion barrels, or 0.7 percent of the world’s known reserves. By 1998, this rose to 27 million barrels.<sup>36</sup> By the end of the century, with its oil reserves thought to rival those of Kuwait, Azerbaijan was set to become the world’s largest oil producer and exporter. Turkey, who enjoyed a close relationship with Azerbaijan, was quick to get in on the act, obtaining a 9 percent stake in an international consortium that had secured the rights to the Shah-Deniz oil field.<sup>37</sup> But, Turkey’s greatest coup was to acquire a 6.75 percent share in the Azerbaijan International Operating Company (AIOC), established in September 1994. The AIOC brought together the Azerbaijani government, on the one hand, and an international consortium of public and private oil companies headed by the United States, on the other.<sup>38</sup> The AIOC agreement, “Contract of the Century,”<sup>39</sup> led to establishment of an operating company which owned the drilling rights to Azerbaijan’s three major oil fields, Azeri, Shiraq and Gunsheli, from which it was eventually hoped to extract some 3.9 million barrels of oil or 35–40 million tons of oil, a year. More realistic estimates set production levels at 800,000 barrels a day, which, at an outlay of a mere 5 dollars per barrel, would still be enough to

provide AIOC members with a tidy profit. The AIOC operating company was also to finance the construction of a pipeline to transport the Azeri oil to outside markets. Turkey, naturally, hoped that the AIOC would select the port of Ceyhan as the pipeline's termination point and to its immense delight it discovered that in this it had the full support of the United States.<sup>40</sup>

### **Energy routes: the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline**

The United States, in line with its goal of increasing the number of global fuel transportation routes across the globe, envisioned the creation of an East to West Caspian energy corridor. In practise, the corridor would consist of twin oil and gas pipelines, which, running under the Caspian Sea, would link Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, on the sea's eastern shore, with Azerbaijan, to the west. From Baku the two pipelines would continue westwards crossing Georgia into Turkey and finally emerging in the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. The oil pipeline – some 1728 km long – was, once operational, hopefully by 2004, to convey 25 million tons of Azeri crude plus 20 million tons of Kazakh crude, a year. It was an immensely complicated and expensive engineering project. The Republics had neither the technical knowhow nor the money – an initial estimate of 2.4 billion dollars soon swelled to a massive 3–4 billion dollars – needed to build the pipelines themselves. Oil revenue money went some way toward paying for the project, as did Turkey's commitment to buy gas from the Republics, which the latter used as collateral to obtain funds for the pipelines' construction. But this provided only a drop in the ocean as far the money needed to finance the project went. Turkey had too many economic problems of its own to afford to go it alone, however much it would have liked to. Clearly, the project was in urgent need of outside investors. Luckily, there was the possibility that the United States, who expressed a great deal of interest in the pipeline, might bail out the project. For one thing, it fell in line with the United States' global energy policies. For another, by passing Russia and Iran, hitherto the region's traditional fuel transport routes, the pipeline dovetailed with the United States' strategic interests. It would help weaken, and possibly isolate, Iran. It would also end Russia's monopoly over the transport of Central Asia's energy resources, thus significantly reducing the Republics' dependence on Moscow. Finally, championing the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan route was also, the Americans thought, a way of compensating Turkey for the economic hardships it had endured in the wake of the Gulf War.<sup>41</sup>

Azerbaijan was keen to cooperate. Eager to reduce its dependence on Russia, its arch-rival Armenia's patron, Baku pushed hard for the southern Ceyhan route. The Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan project would also, the Azeris hoped, as a bonus, result in the annulment of section 907 of the United States' 1992 Freedom Support Act (FSA). Thanks to the FSA, which sought to help the ex-Soviet Republics find their economic, social and political feet, the United States poured some 1.3 billion



dollars into Central Asia and the Caucasus between 1992 and 1998. Medical care, particularly prenatal and child healthcare was a top priority, and the United States spent vast amounts of money modernizing the Republics' primitive health infrastructures. It sent them medicine and basic medical equipment, as well as doctors and medical teams to help combat various infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, which still plagued the region. The United States also became one of chief contributors to the United Nation's High Commissioner of Refugees' program to relieve the plight of the hundreds of thousands of refugees in the region. It even sent, on its own initiative, 200,000 ready-made meals to help feed some of these unfortunate people. Azerbaijan, to its intense disappointment, benefited very little from all this. In 1993, following the Nagorno-Karabakh war and some very heavy pressure on the part of the American Armenian lobby, the Senate passed an amendment to the FSA, known as section 907, which severely limited the amount of humanitarian assistance Azerbaijan could receive directly from the United States. Other than protest, there was very little Azerbaijan could do about this, until, that is, the discovery of Azeri oil, which together with the southern pipeline route constituted a powerful incentive for the United States to abandon section 907, not least because Washington feared that if it did not clinch the deal, others such as the EU, Japan, or even Iran, would. Azerbaijan, thus had every reason to hope for the best, as did Turkey.<sup>42</sup>

Turkey had great many hopes invested in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan route and launched a public relations campaign highlighting the project's many advantages. Russia, it pointed out, owing to stormy weather, was regularly obliged to close its Black Sea ports for part of the year. The Ceyhan port, on the other hand, which enjoyed a mild Mediterranean climate, could operate all year round. When discussing the route's many merits, Ankara tended to emphasize those that just happened to mesh with the United States' interests. It called attention to the fact that the three current fuel routes ran through Russia, Armenia and Iran, all of which were either politically unstable or hostile to Washington. This could not be said of Azerbaijan, Georgia or Turkey. The project would also, Ankara enthused, end Russia's monopoly over the Republics' oil exports and thus loosen its grip on the region.<sup>43</sup>

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project faced several problems, most of which involved money. The Republics' oil industries were in their infancy and few of them had the infrastructures necessary to carry out oil exploration operations, to drill for oil or to transport it elsewhere. In most cases these had to be built from scratch – a costly business, which might prove too much for investors, especially if there were other less expensive alternatives, such as, for example, the Middle East, available. Indeed, the landlocked Republics, with their nascent oil industries, found it very difficult to compete with the Middle East which, thanks to its flourishing seventy-year-old oil business and easy access to the sea, could afford to sell its oil at rock bottom prices and keep transport costs to a minimum. As for transporting Caspian oil itself, Iran, Armenia and Russia all offered cheaper and quicker alternatives than the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan route.

Azerbaijan's reluctance to send its oil across Armenia, and Turkey's and the United States' veto on the idea of ferrying the oil through Russian or Iranian territory, left Georgia, as the only possible land link, and a much longer one at that, between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Pumping oil through pipelines is an expensive business – the longer the pipeline the higher the outlay – and, at 1728 km, the operating costs of the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan line were daunting. A highly circuitous route, it would also take much longer to transport the oil. Conversely, Russia's Baku–Novorossiysk and Georgia's Baku–Suspa – Suspa being Georgia's Black Sea port – routes were shorter, cheaper and, no less importantly, already being used to ship small amounts of Azeri oil across the Black Sea. Accordingly, with their infrastructures more or less in place, they could be ready to ferry large amounts of oil far sooner than the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline, and at a fraction of the cost. The Caspian Pipeline Consortium's pipeline (CPC) was another more cost effective alternative to the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan route. The 1580 km long pipeline – costing 2.5 billion dollars – was to connect the Tengiz field's oil in Kazakhstan to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. Boasting a capacity of 560,000 barrels per day, or 28 million tons a year, it had every chance of becoming the principal transport route of Caspian crude over the next twenty-five years. The CPC had one other huge advantage over its rival: it was run by the powerful American Exxon and European Chevron oil companies, and was thus likely to win Western backing. In sum, given the estimated cost of the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan route which at 3–4 billion dollars, was twice, even three times, more than that of any of the rival routes, there was every chance that the AIOC would eventually opt for one of the already functioning, shorter or cheaper Black Sea routes.<sup>44</sup>

Global oil prices also reduced the odds on the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan project ever seeing the light of day. In the late 1990s, overproduction led to huge oil surpluses and, as a result, a massive drop in oil prices. The Caspian states, as newcomers to the oil business, had, at first, to make do with even lower prices. This jeopardized the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan project on two counts: first, because the construction of the pipeline was to be financed in part with oil revenue money; second, because the AIOC companies may balk at the idea of building an expensive pipeline, expensive to build and expensive to run, in return for a profit so small it would hardly cover their outlay. One way around the problem was simply to ship more oil in return for more money. Indeed, it was generally agreed that in order to become economically viable, the pipeline had to convey oil from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan – potentially the Caspian Sea's two largest oil producers – as well from oil fields still under exploration. Yet, even this additional oil may not be sufficient to turn the pipeline into a financially sound venture. Though by 2008, the region will probably produce some 700,000 barrels a day, this will still not be enough to offset the pipeline's operating costs, not to mention a decent profit margin for investors.<sup>45</sup>

But perhaps the greatest obstacle to the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline's prospects was Russia's fierce opposition to the project. Russia was convinced

that the pipeline was part of a long-term American–Turkish plot – conspiracy was how it put it – to undermine Moscow’s position in Central Asia and the Caucasus, and take over the region’s oil market. While Russia was confident that it could handle Turkey fairly easily, having already had some experience in successfully fending off Turkish challenges in the region, Washington’s intervention was a completely different story. Though the United States’ growing interest in Central Asia and refusal to recognize it as a Russian sphere of influence came as no surprise, it did, nonetheless cause concern in Moscow. The Russians interpreted the United States’ constant meddling in the Republics as part of an overall program designed to drive Russia out of the Central Asia and the Caucasus region and replaced it as the dominant regional power. In order to verify their theory the Russians only had to look to the part the Americans played in the establishment of the Central Asian Peacekeeping Battalion (CENTRASBAT). CENTRASBAT was set up in order to allow greater coordination and cooperation between the armed forces of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and held its first exercise in September 1997. So how, the Russians asked themselves, were they to explain the fact that the United States sent a retired General, designated the Special Representative of the US Defense Secretary, to help the member states set up the organization? CENTRASBAT was clearly a part of an American scheme to gain control of the area, was the conclusion. Washington’s onslaught on Central Asia’s and the Caucasus’ oil market was part of the same plan, though in this case, the Russians thought, the aim was not simply to wrest the region’s oil trade from Russia, but to “gain undivided control of the world’s oil and gas market.”<sup>46</sup>

Russia had no doubt that if the United States was unable, for what ever reason, to control all or part of the region’s oil resources itself, it would be quite happy to see Turkey, with its strong links in the region, do so in its stead. After all, in this new cold war, it made little difference which party to the alliance weakened Russia. The Russians probably agreed with Paul Wihbey, who observed that in the race for the Caspian Sea oil, the Americans had no more valuable ally than Turkey, who thanks to its geostrategic location, history and ethnic fabric could counteract Moscow, in ways and methods that Washington could not. Each dollar spent on Turkish defense and on increasing Turkey’s power will, eventually, save much American blood and money, he added.<sup>47</sup> All this explained, the United States support for planned pipeline through Turkey, which Moscow protested, would engender serious Russian financial losses and lead to “an escalated drift of several post-Soviet republics to Ankara, away from Moscow,” which was, the Russians suspected, the whole point of the project anyway.<sup>48</sup> Turkey, hoping to strengthen its position vis-à-vis Russia, fuelled the latter’s fears of American–Turkish collaboration, Ismail Cem boasting that the United States and Turkey, seeing eye to eye on a wide range of strategic, political as well as fuel-related subjects, strode hand in hand in Central Asia and the Caucasus.<sup>49</sup>

Russia, therefore, had every reason, economically, politically and strategically, to put a spoke in the wheels of the Baku–Tiblisi–Ceyhan project. Unfortunately

for Turkey, Russia, who still wielded considerable political, economic and military influence in the region, had an almost infinite capacity to cause trouble. Georgia, for example, a key member of the project would, as Ankara knew and feared, “not be immune to Russian pressure or terrorist activity,” designed to hamper to the pipeline’s operation. If Russia failed in Georgia, it could always stir up more trouble between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and bring Azeri oil production to halt.<sup>50</sup> Nor did the Russians necessarily have to indulge in dirty tricks. As a Black Sea state Russia could simply refuse to sanction the construction of a trans-Caspian underwater pipeline. Given that without Kazakh and Turkmeni oil the project was not economically viable, the Russian veto would probably be enough to kill off the entire project. In its battle against the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline, Russia found an unexpected ally in Iran. Iran, too, opposed the project, both for economic reasons and because of fears that it would lead to growing Turkish and American influence in the Central Asia.

Fearing Russia’s ability to block if not destroy altogether the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan project, and not really wanting to embark upon an oil war with Moscow, Turkey and the United States decided that, rather than challenge Russia, it would be better to work with it. They, therefore, elected to involve Russia and, for much the same reasons, Iran in the project in a limited way. The United States suggested to Moscow that Russian firms should also export oil through the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan and CPC pipelines.<sup>51</sup> Turkey backed the American offer; first, because if accepted it would improve the chances of its project materializing; second, and no less importantly, it would remove one of the major sources of Russian–Turkish friction, always a Turkish priority. Indeed, having boasted of Turkey’s close alliance with the United States, Cem was quick to reassure the Russians that they had nothing to worry about by pointing out that not “everything done to date [had] been a fight with Russia.”<sup>52</sup> This was also why Turkey was willing, with the United States’ approval – the United States having a vested interest in defusing any potential conflict between Russia and its ally Turkey – to give Russia a stake on the AIOC consortium.

In order to persuade Russia to accept its offer, the United States played up the advantages, to the Russians, of doing so. Frederico Pena, the United States’ Energy Secretary, played up the merits of the East to West energy corridor, which, he claimed, could serve and secure Russia’s energy and commercial needs. For one thing, the AIOC and CPC could ferry oil from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. For another, both consortiums would offer Russia better access to more attractive markets.<sup>53</sup> Robert Gee, the United States’ Assistant Secretary of Energy for Policy and International Affairs, added that Russian participation in the AIOC would render it a much larger share in the region’s oil business than anything it could afford independently. The Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline specifically could benefit Russia financially, as using it would offset any financial losses Moscow incurred owing to lost haulage business. In sum, Gee concluded, Russia’s participation in the AIOC, created a win-win situation from which everybody gained.<sup>54</sup> Russia,

though not entirely convinced, and still suspicious of the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan project, accepted the invitation. The Russian oil company, LUKOIL joined the AIOC, thus winning a stake in the Azeri oil market. While Russia will probably still push hard for the Black Sea route, its membership in the AIOC and CPC consortiums may temper its opposition to the Turkish Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan project, enhancing the latter's prospects of success.<sup>55</sup>

By the beginning of the twenty-first century the odds on the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan route materializing rose significantly. A sharp increase in oil prices, from under 10 dollars a barrel, in 1998, to 35 dollars a barrel, in September 2000, enhanced the route's commercial competitiveness vis-à-vis its Black Sea rival. The new restrictions on oil tanker traffic through the Straits, also improved the chances of the Mediterranean route, as Turkey knew they would. In addition, Turkey, in order to augment the route's attractiveness, considered offering the pipeline's users tax reductions and subsidies, instituting special tariff regimes and giving concessions on the price of crude oil as well as granting users right-of-way privileges. By the end of the 1990s, one of the few remaining clouds on the horizon was the request that Turkey absorb any construction costs above the initial 2.4 billion dollar estimate, a sum that could reach well over 1 billion dollars, which Turkey can ill afford. But, bearing in mind the future payoff, it would be money well invested, especially if Ankara can persuade the United States to foot part of bill. And it might well do, as the United States knows every cent spent on Turkey will, in the long run, serve American global, regional and economic interests.<sup>56</sup>

### **Turkey and the United States**

Turkey's relationship with the United States during the 1990s was not all plain sailing, especially compared to what it had been during the fifty or so years of the cold war, when the United States considered Turkey, thanks to the latter's key geostrategic location, one of its most valuable assets in the battle against communist Russia. Anxious not lose such a vital ally, the United States, did all it could to keep Turkey sweet, by among other things selling it cut-price weapons or awarding it special economic privileges. It was even willing to overlook Turkey's various offences against human rights. Not that the Turks, being as eager to retain the United States' friendship as Americans were to keep theirs, needed much if any, as some would put it, bribing. The demise of the Soviet Union, in 1991, however, led to a slight shift in the United States' policy towards Turkey, the Americans believing that there was no longer as great a need to pamper Turkey. There was also the fact that after almost fifty years of cooperation the United States tended to take Turkey for granted, or at least that was how it appeared to disgruntled Turkish officials, who complained bitterly that the American Secretary of State had visited Damascus twenty-four times, between 1992 and 1996, without bothering to call upon Ankara even once.<sup>57</sup> Things

improved somewhat during and in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, when the United States needed Turkey's help to wage its war against Saddam Hussein. Then came 1996, which reminded, indeed impressed on, Washington just how valuable and, possibly, irreplaceable an ally Turkey was.

This (1996) proved to be a very bad year for Washington in the Middle East. On the diplomatic front it seemed to have very few friends left in the region. It had no official diplomatic relations with Iraq, Iran, Libya, and Sudan, and its relationship with its few remaining allies was increasingly shaky. Saudi Arabia, extremely nervous at having to play host to a large number of American troops, would periodically raise the matter with Washington, in the hope of getting them out or at least significantly reducing their numbers. More worrying still, Americans, living or serving in Saudi Arabia, became the target of Islamic terrorists, who in June 1996 bombed the American base in Daharan, killing nineteen soldiers and wounding hundreds of others. Egypt, one of the United States' closest allies was not only increasingly critical of Washington's policies on the Arab-Israeli conflict, but also drawing closer to Libya, one of the United States' regional *bête noirs*. Even Israel, perhaps the United States' staunchest Middle East ally, appeared, following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and election of the right-wing Benjamin Netanyahu to the post of Prime Minister, set on giving Washington a hard time. Netanyahu's entry into office did not augur well either for the peace process or American-Israeli relations. Not surprisingly, Turkey's friendship suddenly appeared increasingly precious, with the United States less and less inclined to take Ankara for granted.

In 1996, Washington was also finally forced to concede that the dual containment of Iran and Iraq had, at best, achieved only mixed results. It was not an entire failure as Iran and Iraq were still largely confined to their borders. Hit hard by American-inspired economic sanctions, they were too busy trying to survive to embark on a program of aggressive conquest. The arms and technological embargo made it much more difficult for them to develop or purchase unconventional weapons and long-range missiles; though, admittedly, their plans in this respect were not entirely frustrated. Nor were the two able to export their revisionist ideologies and policies. In sum, thanks to the policy of dual containment, Iran and Iraq no longer posed an immediate and serious threat to their neighbors.

On the other hand, both Saddam Hussein and the Iranian mullahs were still in power and showed no sign of loosening their ferocious grip on their countries. Nor had they renounced their vow to subvert the region, if not the world, shaping it according to their lights. Moreover, neither country, despite the United States' best efforts, was entirely isolated, either economically or politically. The Arab countries worried lest their own populations blame them for the sufferings of the Iranian and, above all, Iraqi people, and, wanting to avoid trouble at home, resumed contact with both countries. Advisable politically, it also proved an extremely profitable step economically. Certainly, Europe and Russia thought so as both eventually closed multibillion dollar trade deals with

Iran. Iraq and Iran also exploited their burgeoning connections with the Arab countries, and neighboring Turkey, to circumvent the oil embargo.<sup>58</sup> These trends continued well into the late 1990s. A rapprochement between Egypt and Iran occurred in 1998. In 2000, Jordan signed a free trade agreement with Iraq. The expulsion of the International Atomic Agency and United Nations (UN) inspection teams, charged with investigating Iraq's non-conventional and nuclear potential, increased the odds on the latter acquiring a nuclear bomb sometime in the future. The fact that the Iranian and Iraqi threat to region, though considerably diminished, remained, served to increase Turkey's worth.<sup>59</sup>

The rise of Islamic radicalism in the Middle East also helped remind Washington of the benefits of having secular Turkey as its ally. For years, Turkey had been the United States' sole reliable Muslim ally in the region. Then, in 1996, Turkey's Islamic Welfare Party came to power. Shocked and somewhat panic-stricken, the United States wondered whether Turkey was not about to go the way of Iran. But if the chances of Turkey becoming an Islamic theocratic state were, as Washington realized once it had calmed down, extremely remote, it dared not risk such an eventuality occurring. In any case, Erbakan in power proved bad enough, as it seemed that the United States could no longer count on Turkey's friendship. Alarm bells began to ring throughout Washington once Erbakan began drawing parallels between PKK terrorism against Turkey and the United States' bombing of Tripoli in 1986. Small wonder, that Washington breathed a massive sigh of relief when Erbakan resigned and his government was replaced by a secular coalition.

Washington well aware that anger with and alienation from the West, due among other things to the EU's incessant criticisms of Turkey and the American Congress's embargo on the sale of weapons to Ankara, had fed the same radical religious sentiments in Turkey that had eventually brought the Welfare Party to power. Not wanting to repeat the Erbakan experience, the United States, was careful to avoid making the same mistakes again. The American Administration therefore, encouraged the EU to accept Turkey into its ranks. It also tried to lift or circumvent Congress's arms sanctions on Turkey. In January 1998, it revoked the suspension imposed on delivery of three frigates to Turkey, two of which were now given to Turkey outright, the third was leased to Ankara for a mere 9 million dollars. That same year, the Turkish air force received seven American-made KC-135R tanker aircraft.<sup>60</sup> It could, therefore, be said that Erbakan marked a crossroads in American-Turkish relations, though not in the way he had hoped. His year in office, alerting the United States to the dangers of losing Turkey, inspired it to multiply its efforts to woo and regain the latter's confidence. After all, as Jesse Helms, Chairman of the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee admitted: "The United States would be paralyzed in the Middle East without Turkey . . . one of the most credible friendly allies of this country."<sup>61</sup>

## Shared interests

After the nadir of 1996, Turkey and the United States became closer than ever. "If," the *TDN* boasted, "the temperature of Turkish–US relations could be measured by the number of Turkish delegations, it would register white-hot on any scale." With a great many interests in common, Turkey and the United States certainly had much to talk about, and high politics, security matters, diplomatic issues, strategic concerns, trade ventures, economic cooperation, cultural affairs and ecological questions all featured on the American–Turkish agenda.<sup>62</sup> That Turkey was the United States sole reliable Muslim ally in the volatile Middle East has already been noted. But, Turkey's political and strategic worth to the United States went way beyond the Middle East. Straddling the Balkans in the West and Central Asia and the Caucasus in the East, Turkey formed an invaluable buffer zone between the West and these extraordinarily explosive areas. Moreover, Turkey often found itself in the very eye of the various ethnic and religious storms that rocked the Middle East, Balkans and Central Asia. Though, admittedly, reluctant to become too closely involved in these regional upheavals, and certainly unwilling to police either area for the West, Turkey, nevertheless, for reasons of its own, helped to defuse, contain, even end a large number of these actual and potential crises, crises which threatened both its and the West's well-being. Turkey also, when it served its interests, helped Washington fight several of its battles in the area – as it did, for example, in the race to corner the Caspian oil market – though always in tandem with the Americans. Indeed, Turkey, "able to counter the Russians in ways America couldn't," proved pivotal to the success of American policies throughout Eurasia. Turkey's achievements, there and elsewhere, underscored its continued and immense value as a partner and ally, despite the end of the cold war. More than one member of the Administration believed that, owing to Turkey's key geostrategic position, each dollar spent on Turkish defense would save double if not treble that amount in American blood and money.<sup>63</sup>

Happily, for Ankara, the United States invested in its beliefs. Throughout the 1990s Turkey received, on average, a generous 0.8 billion dollars of American aid a year.<sup>64</sup> It also enjoyed a steady stream of American weapons. During the Clinton years, it obtained about 800 million dollars worth of weapons per annum, becoming one of the world's largest recipients of American arms, surpassed only by such long-term and valued American clients like Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Israel and Egypt. Between 1990 and 1995, Turkey acquired 1.53 billion dollars worth of surplus American military equipment; second only to Greece, who, to Turkey's disgust, secured 1.8 billion dollars worth of equipment, but way ahead of Israel, who obtained only 718 million dollars worth.<sup>65</sup> Over all, during the eight years of Clinton's presidency, the United States furnished Turkey with four times as many weapons, as it did between 1950 and 1983 at the height of the cold war. The Clinton Administration also made it much easier for American companies to compete for Turkish tenders for the sale of advanced



weapons systems like the 4.5 billion dollar, 145 King Cobra advanced attack helicopters deal. The United States also became closely involved in Turkey's military training programs and participated in various Turkish military exercises; to a greater extent even then it did surpass those of its two other regional front-line allies: Egypt and Israel.<sup>66</sup>

NATO, too, provided a fruitful basis for American–Turkish cooperation. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the two countries banded together in an effort to expand NATO membership, beyond its current North American–West European limits. During the Balkan wars, Turkey, with America's blessing, took part in various NATO operations to end the fighting and keep the peace in the region. In the early stages of the war in Bosnia, Ankara helped enforce NATO's sanctions against Serbia. After the war, it contributed troops to the NATO force in Bosnia, charged with implementing the Dayton Peace Accords. During the Kosovo crisis, Turkey joined the West in its efforts to deter Serbia and prevent it attacking Muslim Albanian refugees. In 1999, it sent 1,000 Turkish troops to the KFOR units in Kosovo. The United States was more than happy to have a predominately Muslim country involved in these and other similar operations in the region, operations that might otherwise have appeared to be exclusively Western, Christian enterprises. Turkey's participation was, Washington thought, doubly useful in that it reassured the local Muslim populations – in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo – that NATO and the other peace-keeping forces, unbiased and impartial, had their best interests at heart. It could also, the United States hoped, silence the Muslim countries' criticisms of the operations, and perhaps even persuade some of them to join the peace-keeping efforts in the Balkans themselves. Turkey saw its participation in the Balkan peacekeeping operations as way of helping the Balkan Muslims, descendants of the loyal subjects of the former Ottoman Empire, but without becoming unilaterally or too closely involved in the conflict. Given that very few, if any, Turks actually volunteered to fight alongside the Muslim Bosnians and Albanians, while the government refused, in principle, to be drawn in to the war, the government felt it necessary to at least be seen to be doing something for the local Muslim population. Participation in the NATO operations was the ideal solution. It put an end to any carping about Turkey's apparent indifference to its Muslim brethren's fate while, at the same time, winning it some very valuable points with the United State and West.<sup>67</sup>

Turkey's and the United States' interest in exploiting the Caspian oil reserves has been dealt with at length. But this was not the only economic interest the two had in common. The United States, having listed Turkey as one of the world's ten biggest emerging markets, began to encourage Americans to invest in its ally's market. Thanks to this and to the fact that Turkey's workforce has an impressive work ethic, but costs very little, American investment in the Turkish textile industry – Turkey's number one export business, accounting for 40 percent of all Turkish exports – and in various assembly-line manufactories – a Turkish speciality – rose spectacularly. Trade between the two counties also

took off. In 1989, American–Turkish trade stood at 3.5 billion dollars, nine years later, in 1998, it approached the 6.3 billion dollars mark. Between 1995 and 1999, the volume of trade between the United States and Turkey jumped by 28 percent. By the end of the decade the American market accounted for 8.8 and 8.3 of all Turkish imports and exports respectively.<sup>68</sup> Turkey exported to the United States a wide range of products, including, despite heavy competition from China’s dirt cheap products, textiles and steel, where Turkish exports increased by 17 percent, and even pasta, with Turkish pasta competing successfully with traditional Italian products. Hoping to expand their profitable trade relations even further, the United States and Turkey opened negotiations over the establishment of a free trade zone in the Adana–Yumurtalik district. Goods produced in the free zone would be exported to the United States, enjoying the special benefits applicable in the US–Israeli free trade agreement.<sup>69</sup>

### **Areas of disagreement**

Like any marriage, however happy, Turkey’s and the United States’ relationship was not entirely quarrel free. The two allies disagreed, sometimes extraordinarily fiercely, over several issues; some minor, some major. Nevertheless, conscious of the benefits of cooperation, the two endeavored to keep, as much as possible, all friction between them to a minimum. At times they succeeded, at others, particularly when matters of conflicting national interests were involved, less so. But, even when deeply divided, and on the face of it pursuing widely divergent policies, the United States and Turkey always managed to find some common ground between them, and, if not, at least a way to rise above their differences.

Polychlorinatedbiphenyl (PCB) pollution in the Incirlik air base district, in northern Turkey was one of the minor, if extremely irritating, to Ankara at least, points at issue between Turkey and the United States. Polychlorinatedbiphenyl, a highly toxic substance found in oil used to cool down electric transformers, is a deadly environmental hazard. In humans, it may, among other things, cause liver dysfunction or severe damage to their reproduction systems. It is also a suspected carcinogenic. In fact PCB is so dangerous that it is no longer produced in the United States. After the closure of the joint American–Turkish military bases in Turkey, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the oil used in the bases’ transformers was sent to Incirlik where it was buried in metal containers. Unfortunately, the containers sprung a leak and the oil began to seep into the soil. Owing to the PCB’s organic properties there was every chance that it would eventually filter into the area’s subterranean waters and reach the Seyhan River, a main water source. Turkey had neither the technical expertise, nor the money needed to decontaminate the area and remove the PCB containers. The United States had both. What is more the United States, having put the PCB there in the first place, albeit it with Turkey’s consent, was also, or so Ankara claimed, morally responsible for this environmental disaster. But when Ankara asked United

States to clean up the mess, the latter, to the Turks amazement, refused, pointing out that as there was no signed agreement between the two on the matter, it was not legally obliged to do so. Dismayed, Ankara approached the Americans again, several times in fact, but to similar effect. Ankara thought Washington's attempt to duck its obligations by relying on legal quibbles especially unsavory, even contemptible, as in the United States, the Environmental Protection Agency ruled that all PCB leaks had to be dealt within forty-eight hours of their discovery. Yet, Turkey remonstrated, in Incirlik PCB has been seeping into the soil for over ten years "and we still cannot get anything done."<sup>70</sup>

The closure of the American–Turkish bases provoked another disagreement between the two countries, this time over the Americans' decision to return various pieces of American military equipment home. The Turkish General Staff, arguing that equipment had been used by both forces, demanded right of approval over which items would be sent back. The Americans refused. The United States, on its part, hoping to cut costs, and, ironically, using the same argument as above, i.e. that both armies had used the equipment, demanded that all items awaiting shipment should be exempt from storage fees and custom duties. This time it was Turkey, loath to miss an opportunity to earn a considerable sum of money and annoyed with the Americans for not leaving behind more weapons, who said no. In 1997 the two, stubborn as ever, were still arguing over these issues.<sup>71</sup>

The United States' reluctance to buy a greater number of military components from Turkey – components used in building American weapons systems, which were then sold to Turkey and other countries – was another bone of contention between the two countries. Turkey would also have liked to sell more military equipment to the United States. The effect, in both cases would have been to give its military-industrial sector a tremendous boost. With money now available to invest in and develop the infrastructure necessary to produce weapons for its own use as well, Turkey would no longer have had to spend vast sums of money buying weapons abroad. Not only that but, it would no longer be dependent on foreign arms suppliers like the EU who often exploited this either to punish Turkey or force it to adopt policies considered detrimental to Turkish interests. Turkey would also have been able to develop its weapons export industry. Unfortunately, none of these dreams materialized as the United States was not inclined to offer Turkey a larger share in the American weapons market. This was extremely disappointing, but what made it really annoying was that the Pentagon, as Ankara discovered to its fury, was considering testing and buying defense equipment from over a dozen countries, including, Russia, but excluding Turkey. "Why," the *TDN* asked plaintively, "wasn't Turkey on the Pentagon's list?" One possible reason, according to Ankara, was the Americans' mistaken assumption that, "Turkey has no defence related material to sell and everything to buy from the United States." But, perhaps, Washington was also happy to keep Turkey dependent on it for weapons, which, like extra insurance, guaranteed that in the final count Turkey would always remain by the United States' side.<sup>72</sup>

Most of these areas of minor disagreement, involving as they did mostly technical and financial issues, mixed in with a bit of petty pride and prestige, though extremely vexing, could be, once the two countries set their mind to it, and with a little give and take on both sides, easily resolved. Not so the various points of dissent, between the Turkey and the United States which as a rule embraced matters of principle, national interest and policy. The United States' and Turkey's policies towards Syria were a case in point. Though both agreed that Syria was an extremely nasty, dangerous, terror-promoting country, divergent regional interests and perspectives led to several disputes over various aspects of the two countries' policies towards Damascus. Throughout the 1990s, Turkey repeatedly asked the United States to put more pressure on the Syria to stop supporting the PKK. The United States, not wanting to alienate Damascus too much and spoil any chances it may have of brokering a peace agreement between Israel and Syria, or, worse, end up pushing Syria into Iran and Iraq's arms, refused. Though, it must said that the State Department promised not to condemn Turkey, if it turned out that Ankara, as part of its campaign to persuade Syria to expel the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, was responsible for the series of bombings in Damascus in 1998, Turkey, for its part, strongly objected to any suggestion of removing Syria from the list of terror promoting countries. The United States, however, suspected that this would probably have to be done as part of the Israeli-Syrian peace agreement. Ankara pointed out, with justice, that while a peace accord may stop Syria supporting anti-Israeli terrorist groups, it would have no such effect on Syria's efforts to promote terrorism in Turkey. There was also some concern in Ankara lest the United States, believing that resolving the Turkish-Syrian water dispute in the latter's advantage would persuade Syria to grant Israel title to the Golan Heights' water resources, this being one of the major obstacles to peace between the two, and in its eagerness to bring the conflict between Syria and Israel to end, would press Turkey to modify its position in its quarrel with Syria over the rights to the waters of the Euphrates. Luckily for Turkey, owing to the deadlock in the Israeli-Syrian peace process, most of these possible sources of acute conflict remained latent, and did not seriously mar American-Turkish relations.<sup>73</sup> This was not so in the case of Iran and Iraq.

In principle Turkey appreciated, even approved of, the logic behind the United States' dual containment policy. After all, it too had a vested interest in keeping Iran and Iraq as weak and as isolated as possible. Yet, at the same time, whether for economic or political reasons, Turkey often opposed and, in practice, ignored the sanctions imposed on both countries. In 1997, Turkey anxious to extend and diversify its energy sources signed a 23 billion dollar gas agreement with Iran. Most of the 228 billion cubic meters of Iranian gas was destined for Turkey's ever-growing gas market, the remainder some 10 billion cubic meters a year was to be sold to Europe, providing the Turks with a handsome source of revenue (see Chapter 4 for more details). In line with the agreement, a pipeline was built connecting the Iranian gas fields in Tabriz with the Turkish cities of Erzeum, Sivas, and Ankara. It was a sweet deal with only one snag: it

violated the sanctions on Iran. Ankara, anxious not aggravate Washington – particularly in view of the 1996 American Iran–Libya Sanctions Act, which imposed heavy penalties on companies or countries investing 20 million dollars or more in the Iranian or Libyan fuel market – insisted that it had not breached the embargo on Iran. Any Turkish investment in the project, it pointed out, had been confined to Turkish territory alone.<sup>74</sup> This was a piece of legal sophistry the Americans found far from convincing. They disliked the gas agreement, which not only filled Iranian coffers, but flew in the face of the United States' declared policy of undercutting Iranian gas with gas from Central Asia. Luckily, for Turkey other than protesting strongly against the agreement, the United States did nothing. Washington, itself, for reasons of profit and politics, had tacitly approved several deals between various Central Asian countries and Iran. Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, for example, had both concluded agreements with Iran, according to which the latter would process Turkmeni and Kazakh crude in its refineries in northern Iran and export the same amount of oil from its Gulf ports. Turkmenistan also agreed to supply Iran's northern cities with gas – a deal explained by the fact that most of Iran's gas fields are located in the south. As these and other similar agreements served to break Russia's monopoly over the Central Asian fuel market, the United States was quite happy to turn a blind eye to their obvious breach of the embargo on Iran. It would have been grossly hypocritical of Washington to punish Turkey for doing the same.<sup>75</sup>

As for Iraq, prior to the Gulf War, trade between Turkey and Iraq amounted to 2.5 billion dollars per annum, making Baghdad one of Turkey's four biggest trading partners. After the war and the institution of sanctions against Iraq, trade between the two dwindled to a mere 200 million dollars a year. Turkey was particularly hard hit by the oil embargo on Iraq. No longer allowed to transport Iraqi oil, it lost one of its most important sources of income. Turkey claimed that sanctions against Iraq had cost it some 35 billion dollars. Not surprisingly, Turkey sought to revoke or at least modify some of the sanctions against Iraq. It also, when it thought it could get away with it, circumvented them. The United States, though questioning Turkey's grim observation that "the first victim of the Gulf War was Iraq the second, Turkey," was generally sympathetic to Turkey's economic difficulties, some of which, it admitted, were indeed caused by the war.<sup>76</sup> It therefore agreed to allow Turkey to ship limited amounts of Iraqi oil, in order to earn a little extra money as well and ease the unemployment situation in the country's poverty-stricken south. It also overlooked Turkey's agreement with Iraq to import crude oil in lieu of the Iraqi debts to Turkish businessmen. The deal stimulated the southeast's faltering transport business, as most of the oil was carried by Turkish trucks and created a large number of new jobs. It also, given that most of the profits went to Iraq's Turkish creditors in the area, injected a great deal of much needed money into the southeast. But this was not enough to satisfy Turkey, and soon with Ankara's tacit consent, thousands of Turkish trucks began carrying tens of thousands of barrels of smuggled Iraqi oil across Turkey. Oil smuggling was a highly lucrative business and the

smugglers, unlike Ankara, were quite happy to see the sanctions remain in place. Oil smuggling also provided a neat solution to Turkey's problem with the UN oil embargo, which might otherwise have led to a serious rupture in relations with the United States. It allowed Turkey to deny that it was in breach of UN sanctions, while still doing business with Iraq and the United States to pretend that nothing was amiss, and the sanctions were strictly enforced.

Turkey also opposed the United States' bombing campaign against Iraq. It had agreed reluctantly to the launching of aerial attacks against Iraq from the Turkish base in Incirlik, and even then only after it had received a quid pro quo in the form of the oil for food agreement, which allowed Turkey to transport a limited amount of Iraqi oil and recoup some of its losses from the Gulf War. Unfortunately, however, the bombing tended to interfere with the smooth shipment of Iraqi oil, as well as disrupt the newly revived, if so far modest, Turkish–Iraqi trade. This added to Turkey's southeast provinces' troubles, as their economic regeneration was largely dependent on the oil transport business and trade with Iraq. But that was not the only reason Turkey objected to the bombing of Iraq. It seriously questioned the political objective behind the bombings, which was to destabilize Saddam's regime, bringing about its eventual demise. Blaming Saddam for the bombing, the Iraqi people would, or so the Americans hoped, either rise up in revolt, or provide the Iraqi opposition with sufficient grassroots support to enable it successfully to topple Saddam. Turkey thought the whole plan delusive and dangerous. It had no faith in the Iraqi opposition, which, it thought, was much too weak and divided to launch an effective coup. It also disliked, in principle, the plan's blatant interference in Iraq's internal affairs, which, it feared, could mark the beginning of new, unwelcome style of interventionist American foreign policy. "It may start in Baghdad," the *TDN* remarked, but "you never know where it ends. Why not Turkey?"<sup>77</sup>

Paradoxically, perhaps, Turkey was horrified, at the possibility, however, slim, that the American plan might succeed. Saddam's demise would probably result in Iraq's disintegration – a nightmare scenario as far as Turkey was concerned. Iraq's dissolution would rock the entire region. One of the few regional powers capable of counter-balancing Iran would disappear and, without Iraq breathing down its neck, Iran would be free to devote itself to undermining and subverting Turkey. It would also, in all likelihood, lead to the establishment of a Kurdish state, which encouraging separatist sentiments among Ankara's Kurds would threaten Turkey's territorial integrity. In sum, instead of welcoming the collapse of its arch-rival, Saddam, Ankara sincerely hoped to prevent it.

The incendiary question of Kurdish nationalism was the subject of a series of American–Turkish quarrels. Turkey consistently denied that there was such a thing as a separate Kurdish identity. Its Kurds, Ankara insisted, were simply Turks who happened to be Kurds. It deeply resented the United States' unwarranted pressure on it to recognize the Kurds' ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity. Washington's attempts to meddle in the Kurdish affair – an, it stressed, internal Turkish matter – was, Ankara complained, completely unjustified and

unacceptable. It could also, Ankara feared, prove to be very dangerous, as Washington was convinced that the only solution to the Kurdish problem, was a political one, which could mean anything from giving them special rights to full autonomy. Having no desire to undermine the monolithic Kemalist nationalism upon which their state was based, or do anything that might threaten its territorial integrity, the Turks utterly rejected the American position. They pointed out that the Kurdish problem far from being an ethnic issue, was simply one of PKK terrorism, which once quashed, would no longer exist. It certainly repudiated any kind of a political solution to the problem, which might end up with Turkey divided into ethnic cantons. The United States disagreed, and, not surprisingly, Turkey's old Sevres phobia soon resurfaced, with Turkey suspecting that the United States was a party to Western Europe's plot to weaken and divide Turkey into small tribal units.<sup>78</sup>

The United States and Turkey were no less divided, and for much the same reasons, over the Kurdish "Safe Haven" in northern Iraq. Admittedly, like Turkey, the United States had no interest in creating an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. It did, however, want to see some kind of strong, united Kurdish entity in the region capable of putting Saddam under considerable pressure. To this end, it welcomed the Iraqi's Kurds' adoption of various state-like qualities, such as the holding of elections. It even toyed with the idea of Kurdish autonomy. The possibility of a future Iraqi federation, which would include a Kurdish state, was also bandied about. This proved too much for Turkey to stomach. At best, it thought, American policy would encourage its own Kurds to demand similar rights for themselves, at worst, it would end in an independent Kurdish state. A Kurdish state, even as part of an Iraqi federation, would in all likelihood adopt a policy of Kurdish irredentism, and, like a magnet, attract Turkey's own Kurdish citizens. Once again Turkey's Sevres complex raised its paranoid head, Ankara suspecting that Washington's advocacy of an independent Kurdish administration was in effect part of a broader scheme to weaken and divide Turkey. It led, as Kemal Kirisci observed, a great many Turks to regard the United States as "an *enemy* state rather than an old strategic ally."<sup>79</sup>

A Kurdish political entity, however diluted its form, might also, Turkey fretted, lead to the collapse of Saddam's regime and to the disintegration of Iraq. In such an event, even without an official Kurdish state in place, a political vacuum would emerge in northern Iraq, which the PKK would be quick to fill. The United States, however, if not anxious for Iraq's disintegration, longed, as noted, to see the back of Saddam. Seeing the Iraqi Kurds as a means to achieve this end, it began to forge close links with the Iraqi Kurdish opposition. Turkey, quite apart from the fact that it had no desire to see the collapse of Saddam's regime, or build up a Kurdish nationalist movement, thought the whole enterprise futile. It had no more faith in the two Kurdish leaders' ability to topple Saddam than it had in that of the Iraqi opposition forces. Moreover, as it pointed out to the United States, dependent on Saddam for fuel, part of which they sold abroad in order to earn money, Barazani or Talabani "have to be at least on speaking

terms with him [Saddam]. So to expect Barazani and Talabani to get into an adventure against Baghdad” with no assurance of its success “would be foolish,” in the extreme.<sup>80</sup> The whole project, Ankara concluded, was a pipe dream. The United States would be far better off adopting Turkey’s sensible and practicable policy of maintaining a weak Kurdish front, just about strong enough to worry or irritate Saddam, but no more.

The Armenian question proved no less of a thorn in the side of American–Turkish relations than the Kurdish problem. The powerful American Armenian lobby persuaded Congress to pass a bill acknowledging that the Ottoman Empire was responsible for the Armenian genocide during the First World War. Quick to respond, to this, to its mind, outrageous accusation which certainly had no basis in reality, the Turkish National Assembly voted to erect, in Ankara, a memorial commemorating the persecution of the American Red Indians by both the United States’ white settlers and its government. It was well within its rights to do so as some of the Red Indian tribes, the Apaches for example, or so Turkish nationalists claimed, indulging in a little fiction-building of their own, had Turkic roots. While Washington could afford to brush off the threat, however embarrassing, to build a monument commemorating the sufferings of the Red Indians, it could not ignore the bill’s possible political and strategic consequences. Hypersensitive to any accusation that it was guilty of the mass murder of well over 1 million Armenians during the war, Turkey was liable to overreact, and tie up the United States’ policies throughout the Middle East, the Balkans and Central Asia. It might do so even though in some cases cooperating with the United States was in its best interests, so that in sense it would be cutting off its nose to spite its face. A prime example of this was the Turkish threat to stop working in tandem with the Americans in the Caspian oil market. It would certainly, the Administration thought, persuade Turkey to withdraw its support from the, in its view, more problematical aspects of American policy, which until now it had supported only extremely reluctantly – the air strikes against Iraq being a case in point. In 1999 alone, the United States launched, from Turkish bases, over 150 air strike against Iraqi targets – mostly radar installations and anti-aircraft batteries, which threatened the American planes patrolling the safe zones in northern and southern Iraq. Not only could Turkey put a stop to this, but it could also expand its trade relations with Iraq and Iran, further weakening the United States’ already fragile dual containment policy. In short, the bill, the Administration realized, could imperil the United States’ efforts to fight “drugs, thugs and terror” in the Middle East.

What is more, Turkey, incensed, appeared set to embark down this highly unnerving road. It warned that it would resume railway links between Baghdad and Turkey. It initiated agreements for the importation of Iraqi crude, and it was a hardly a coincidence that just as the bill was being discussed in Congress, Turkey suddenly decided to upgrade its mission to Baghdad to that of a full-blown embassy. Ankara denied that there was any connection between the two issues but the Administration, aware that it would achieve nothing in Iraq or



elsewhere “unless the Turks were on the same page,” took the hint and forced Congress to withdraw the bill.<sup>81</sup> But the issue did not disappear. In January 2001 the French National Assembly accepted a bill that attributed the massacres of the Armenians to the Turks. Accordingly, the city of Paris decided on building a monument in memory of the Armenian victims. Ankara retaliated economically, barring French companies from participating in Turkish tenders, and cancelled the procurement of security items from France. The Lord Mayor of Ankara decided to retaliate by building a monument in memory of the Algerians killed by French troops. “Similar measures would be taken against any country that would link the Armenian plights to the Turks,” warned Turkish officials.<sup>82</sup>

Given the headache the US Congress bill had caused it, Washington was determined, not, if it could help it, to reopen the Armenian issue ever again. Thus, Turkey scored a double victory. It not only killed off the present bill, and probably any other similar bill in the future, it also drove home to the Administration the fact that not only did it need Turkey, but, no less importantly, that it could not take Turkish cooperation for granted. In the case of the Armenian bill, by allowing Turkey to prove, once again, that it was in nobody’s pocket, it induced the Americans to redouble their efforts to woo Ankara, and treat it and its interests with greater respect.

## Human rights

One of the biggest issues liberal Washington had to take up with Ankara during the 1990s was the latter’s human rights policies. In 1977, the United States’ State Department presented Congress with the first of a series of annual reports on the human rights situation throughout the world. Over the years, the portion of the report devoted to Turkey grew consistently larger. Moreover, if at first, the State Department’s criticisms of Turkey were relatively mild, by the end of the 1990s it pilloried Turkey’s human rights policies, which it fiercely and uniformly condemned. Nor was the State Department exaggerating. In 1999, Turkey topped the European Court of Human Rights’ list of thirty-seven countries accused of violating human rights. Out of the 7,771 complaints registered in the court, Turkey received a record 1,825 complaints, way ahead of Italy, who was second in line with 1,191 complaints.<sup>83</sup> The complaints specified, *inter alia*, beating, assault, and torture. The 1998 report of the Human Rights Association, the Istanbul Branch, listed the most common methods of torture at Turkish police and gendarmerie stations, as threatening with rape, disappearing under torture, torturing the victim’s family, displaying a pregnant woman nude to her husband, etc. There were also “common” methods such as beating, electric shocks, and hitting the victim’s head with an iron bar.

In view of the large number of politically motivated arrests in Turkey, the country’s detention and prison systems came under intense international scrutiny and criticism. Turkey was accused of breaking of the rules of custody

by, among other things, assaulting, beating, and even torturing prisoners and detainees. Suspects could be held for up to fifteen or thirty days without arraignment. They could be questioned without legal counsel present. The practise of torturing detainees, both during police questioning and after, was fairly widespread. According to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, between September 1980 and September 1995, 445 people had undergone torture and died in Turkish detention centers. Human rights associations report that 80 percent of women serving time in Turkish prisons were raped. There are 72,000 prisoners in Turkey's heavily dense prisons. As *Time* found, some prisoners share their beds with others, and most prisons are dormitory-style in acute need of improvement to make them suitable for the accommodation of human beings. Attempts by the authorities and the inmates to change conditions often result in riots, hunger strikes, death-fast, and bloodshed. The authorities reasoned they could better maintain order and discipline by reducing numbers and the transfer of convicts from large, dormitory-style facilities to new single or triple-bunk cells. However, the prisoners expressed fear of being moved to smaller cells, even if in new, more comfortable buildings. The relative isolation, they argued, would leave them at the mercy of their jailers, who could more easily bully or torture them. "There is safety in numbers," the inmates said.<sup>84</sup> In early 2002 there were more than 100 people on hunger strike in a dozen Turkish prisons. Those on the death-fast track took only liquid and vitamins but at a rate that permitted them to waste away at a very slow rate.<sup>85</sup>

The State Department 1999 report on human rights, noted that though the Turkish constitution allows for freedom of speech and the press, and though there is no official censorship in Turkey, in practise both freedoms are severely curtailed. Anyone deviating from the official government line, when discussing the Kurds, the status of Islam in the country, the military's role in politics, the Armenian question, or Turkish-Greek-Cypriot relations, risked censure, if not imprisonment.<sup>86</sup> In 1996, Amnesty International and the New York based Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) accused Turkey of harassing, intimidating and imprisoning human rights activists, lawyers and journalists, whose only crime was to voice ideas contrary to government policy. Between 1994 and 1996, Turkey had the dubious honor of being the country that had arrested the most journalists, its rivals for the title being those well-known paragons of liberalism: Ethiopia, communist China, Kuwait, Nigeria and Myanamer (Burma).<sup>87</sup> Nor have things improved much since. According to PAN, the International Organization of Authors and Poets, after China, Turkey boasted the largest number of imprisoned writers and journalists in the world. It had incarcerated 132 writers for thought crimes; ordered the closer of 152 associations, newspapers and magazines all of which were guilty of criticizing government policy, while Turkish officials had banned 331 subversive books and newspapers.<sup>88</sup> In July 1999, the Turkish Press Council published the names of fifty-five journalists who, having written articles deemed harmful to the Turkish state, were either in prison or facing criminal charges. The *Voice of America*

revealed that over the past seven years twenty-five Turkish journalists had died in highly questionable circumstances.<sup>89</sup> To its immense credit, the Turkish press, despite the risks involved, remained courageously defiant. Often, the Turkish journalists sole, if meager, defense against government harassment was to report on the government's gross violations of the principle of free speech, usually at the cost of their jobs if not their freedom.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, giving no quarter, they continued to criticize mercilessly both government and army policies. Nothing and no one were exempt from the Turkish press's ruthless scrutiny, which as random perusal of both English and Turkish journals shows, was not inclined to voice its disapproval delicately or be less forceful in its views.

The Kurds and the advocates of Kurdish nationalism came in for some particularly rough treatment. Until 2000, there were no legal publications in Kurdish in Turkey and anyone daring to voice an opinion sympathetic to Kurdish nationalism risked being arrested automatically. According to Amnesty International's 1996 report, the government consistently violated the rights of the members of the pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HADEP). Defiant, Kurdish activists continued to publish material on their people's plight and lack of rights, distributing it through the Kurdish underground network. The government's violation of Kurdish rights, particularly during its war against the PKK, was strongly criticized abroad. Amnesty International, the New York based CPJ, and the Human Rights Watch/Helsinki all highlighted Turkey's human rights offenses in the Kurdish southeast. However, to be fair, they devoted equal space to PKK atrocities against civilians, men, women and children, which, they admitted, were among the most viciously obscene violations of human rights on record.<sup>91</sup> The State Department's 1999 report pinpointed the Kurdish southeast as the area in most need of change in terms of Turkey's human rights situation. Things improved a little, after the end of the PKK war in 1999, when the government allowed the publication of at least a few works in Kurdish. However, sensitive as ever about the subject of Kurdish nationalism the government periodically cracked down on individuals and publications too openly sympathetic to the Kurdish cause.<sup>92</sup>

Islamic activists were also victimized by the state. Despite sanctioning and even, to a degree, encouraging the growth of political Islam, the Turkish authorities, extremely sensitive to the threat political Islam posed to the country's secular identity, took, when necessary, appropriate action – or as the State Department would have it, inappropriate action – to frustrate it. The State Department's 1999 report noted and strongly criticized the ten-month prison sentence imposed on Istanbul's mayor, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, found guilty of calling for a religious insurrection in speech he gave in Siirt, in December 1997. The speech included the following verse from a 1920s folk song: "the mosques are our barracks, the believers are our soldiers, the minarets are our bayonets, their domes are our helmets and the faithful our army," which apparently was enough to convict Erdogan of seditious activity.<sup>93</sup> The report also censured the Turkish Constitutional Court's decision to dissolve the Welfare Party for its

supposed infringements of the state's secular constitution. It also condemned the ban imposed on several of the party's leaders, including Erbakan, barring them from taking an active part in Turkish politics. Nor was that the end of it. In June 2001, the Constitutional Court dissolved the Islamic Virtue Party for ostensibly anti-secular activities. In January 2002, the Constitutional Court ruled that Erdogan, already on the government's hit list of subversive Islamic activists, could not head any political party. The decision prevented him from entering parliament and scotched his plans to form a new moderate Islamic party, by the name of the Justice and Development Party. As earlier noted, the Islamic parties were not the Constitutional Court's only casualties. Since 1963, the court had disbanded some twenty-two political parties for undermining the constitution's secular articles or violating the principles of democracy.

Turkey was severely criticized for being too lax and not disciplining wayward prison wardens and policemen. It failed to stop them from violating suspects' and prisoner's rights and did not punish them appropriately when they did. The few who were brought to trial, their crimes, such as beating a detainee to death, being too shocking to ignore or impossible to cover up, were sentenced, at the most, to seven and half years in prison. With time off for good behavior, it meant that they would only spend two to three years in jail.<sup>94</sup>

The State Department's 1999 report highlighted three areas that were in urgent need of radical reform. The first focused on Turkey's consistent failure to observe the principle of free speech and expression, including the right of religious freedom. The second concerned the state's odious treatment of human rights activists, including non-governmental organizations, doctors, lawyers, even parliamentarians who were subjected to constant censure, harassment and imprisonment. The third related to the handling of political detainees. The report expressly demanded that Turkey decriminalize free speech, release journalists and parliamentarians imprisoned for political reasons, put an end to the practise of torturing suspects during interrogation and after, and indict officers found guilty of doing so. Turkey should also allow the various non-governmental organizations, shut down for political reasons, to reopen. The report urged the government to democratize the country's political system even further and permit more people holding different views to partake in the political process, lift the state of emergency in the southeast, and resettle the refugees displaced by its war against the PKK.<sup>95</sup>

The State Department's censure of Turkey was nothing compared to the American human rights lobby's impassioned condemnation of Turkey's human rights policies. The latter not only condemned Turkey violations of human rights, but demanded that Congress and the Administration take action to stop this state of affairs. To this end, it joined forces with other anti-Turkey, non-governmental organizations and lobbies, who had criticisms of Turkey. For example, these bodies regularly accused Turkey of supporting the Azeri army, obstructing Western aid to Armenia, violating the country's Greek and Armenian minorities' religious freedoms, and supplying weapons to Chechen rebels.

Forming a large pressure group, these organizations pressed Congress to enact anti-Turkish legislation. The human rights lobby also pressed Congress to cut all aid, specifically military aid, to Turkey. These requests, purposely phrased in such a way as to show Turkey in the worst possible light ("Ankara was black-mailing Washington, begging for more weapons by using its poor economic records"), did not win it many friends in Congress.<sup>96</sup> Still, in 1997 and 1998, to the anti-Turkish lobby's delight, Congress decided to cut subsidies on arms exported to Turkey, on the grounds that these weapons could not be used against non-combatants during Turkey's war against the PKK.

By the end of 1990s, the threat to reduce military aid to Turkey in an effort to persuade it to reform its human rights policies, or any other of its policies for that matter, was no longer the potent weapon it had been. For one thing, Turkish firms were producing more and more military modules themselves, including a number used in American weapon systems. Less dependent on American modules, Ankara was able to shrug off threats to stop sending it spare parts if it did not improve its behavior. For another, Turkey, or so the human rights lobby claimed, deliberately announced an amazing 150 billion dollar arms procurement program, which, as Turkey intended, got the global and American arms market "salivating"<sup>97</sup> over the prospect of huge long-term profits. Turkey, so argued the lobby, had in effect, enlisted the help of the all-powerful world arms industry, which exerted heavy pressure on the American Administration and Congress, as well as governments around the world, to overlook its human rights violations. Whether or not this was Turkey's aim in announcing the program, the fact was that within a short time of the announcement the United States lifted several bans on the sale of weapons to Turkey.

As noted by Kemal Kirisci, Ankara, convinced that Congress was endemically hostile to Turkey, expected the stronger Congressional role in foreign policymaking in recent years to work to Turkey's disadvantage since its main advocates were in the Defense and State Departments and National Security Council. Congress's actions during the 1990s certainly appeared to bear out its forebodings, and the Secretary General of the Turkish General Staff, General Erol Ozkaskan, expressed concern lest the "the speed of our [Turkish-American] relations will not be halted by some Congress members." Turkey thought that the Administration had failed it in this respect and had not done enough to ensure a friendlier Congress. But, confident that the chances of its human rights record having any practical effect on the Administration's policy were extremely remote, the State Department's periodic censure did not particularly worry it either. After all, in the State Department, as in the Defense Department and the National Security Council, all of whom were Ankara's "main advocates . . . strategic interests regarding Turkey usually prevail."<sup>98</sup>

The United States continued, throughout the 1990s, to sell arms to Turkey, its human rights policies notwithstanding. In the aftermath of the Gulf War the Republican Bush Administration promised Turkey a vast amount of weapons. The Democratic Clinton Administration not only made good its predecessor's

pledge but made a few of its own. In fact, in terms of overall value, 47 percent of American arms shipments to Turkey, between 1984, the year the war against the PKK began, and 2000, took place under President Clinton. Clearly, the Clinton Administration despite its seemingly greater commitment to human rights issues, apparently, saw no reason to change the United States' policy on the sale of arms to Turkey.<sup>99</sup> This was, in part, because, like all American Administrations, it was sensitive to Turkey's singular internal and external circumstances. Threatened from within by Islamic and separatist movements, and living in an unstable and unpredictable region, surrounded by states who would like nothing better than to weaken and destabilize it, Turkey, the Americans realized, often felt that it had no choice but to defend itself, without necessarily paying too much attention to liberal niceties. The United States understood and sympathized with Turkey's – as it saw it – ongoing fight for its existence, even if the specific form it took did not always accord with Western or democratic values or even Western policy. Hence Washington silence when Turkey's Generals effectively toppled Erbakan from power, contrary to the rules of Western democracy. As for the Kurds, Washington, despite its basic endorsement of the principle of Kurdish nationalism, branded the PKK a terrorist organization, backed the idea of a Turkish security zone in northern Iraq, and approved, tacitly, of Turkey's search-and-destroy missions against the PKK bases in the area. It also sanctioned, and perhaps even took part in, the Turkish operation to capture Abdalluh Ocalan, an operation that skirted dangerously close to the edges of international law.

But, perhaps, above all, it was the Administration's appreciation of Turkey's value as an ally that ultimately persuaded it if not to ignore Turkey human rights offences, then at least not to let them affect its working relationship with Ankara. In a region riven by ethnic strife, that was politically unstable and economically weak, as well as scarred by terrorism and generally hostile to the West, Turkey, whatever its faults, was a virtual rock of stability. It had already demonstrated its worth in the Gulf War, in Bosnia and in Kosovo, and with new conflicts brewing in the Middle East, the Caspian and Caucasus, the United States needed its Turkish ally more than ever. It certainly had no desire to antagonize it unduly on issues relating to human rights violations. And when that proved impossible owing to Congress's intervention, it exploited the burgeoning Israeli–Turkish relationship either to transfer aid to Turkey indirectly or convince Congress, which was as a rule pro-Israeli, that by helping Turkey it was also helping its ally Israel.<sup>100</sup> In any case, as the Administration pointed out to Turkey's critics, compared to some of its neighbors – Iran, Iraq, Syria, and even Egypt and Saudi Arabia, among the West's principal allies – Turkey, a constitutional, secular country, which shared many of the West's goals and values, and whose political and social models were grounded in Western principals, was a paragon of democratic virtue.

The Administration was also convinced that harping too much on Turkey's dubious human rights policies and using threats in order to blackmail Turkey

into reforming itself was, ultimately, counterproductive. It believed that there was a direct link between the EU decision, in 1997, to reject Turkey's membership application and the latter's consistently poor human rights record. Turkey, it argued, having been rebuffed by the EU, at Luxembourg, had little incentive to improve its human rights performance. According to the United States, instead of using the prospect of EU membership as a stick with which to beat Turkey over the head, the Europeans should use it as a carrot in order to encourage Ankara to reform. It believed that the promise of admission would inspire Turkey to overhaul its political, social, judicial systems, and bring them in line with Western practises. After all, it had worked before with Spain, Portugal and Greece, why not with Turkey? Yet, the Europeans, unconvinced, refused to listen, and were resentful that Washington was trying to tell them whom they should admit to their club. They turned a deaf ear to the American warning that the Turkish government, Turkish liberals, intellectuals as well as the public, believing that Turkey, the victim of European bias, was blatantly discriminated against, would, increasingly frustrated, eventually turn their backs on the West altogether. Still the United States did not give up and throughout the late 1990s urged the EU to admit Turkey into its ranks, while criticizing the Europeans' "shameless and short-sighted" policies and acknowledging that "they [the Turks] had every right to feel betrayed."<sup>101</sup>

Not that the Administration was blind to Turkey's human rights transgressions. It admitted that there were problems in this respect and periodically impressed on Turkey that it expected it, as a democracy, to heed its appeals to reform itself. By the end of the 1990s, Administration officials were happy to announce that there was some "reason for optimism" in this respect as there had been some definite and obvious "changes for the better" in Turkey's human rights performance. Amnesty International upheld the American assessment. The 1999 Amnesty International report on Turkey noted that there had been, since 1995, a significant drop in the number of Turkish prisoners who suffered ill treatment or had undergone torture, as well as fewer disappearances and extra judicial executions. This was partly due to the long overdue change in Turkey's habeas corpus laws. Since 1996, detainees had the right to legal counsel within four days of their arrest, the right to have a lawyer present during interrogation, and the right to have a lawyer accompany them throughout their detention period. The gradual decline in the war against the PKK also had a positive impact on Turkey's human rights situation. In addition, the report acknowledged that for the past few years "there has been much talk, apparently sincere," in Turkey of new laws, programs and regulations to improve human rights. But, at the same time, the report warned that much more had to be done – including, and above all, chastising and punishing officials guilty of human rights offences – before Turkey could claim to have set right its human rights record.<sup>102</sup>

By the end of 1999 the United States, pleased with Turkey's efforts to reform, believed that henceforth things could only get better. Administration officials pointed out that Ocalan's capture bringing the war against the PKK to

an effective end meant that “80 percent of the excuses of the Turkish government” as regards “rights abuses disappeared.”<sup>103</sup> The PKK’s unilateral declaration of a cease-fire, in February 2000, gave hope for even further improvement, as did the EU decision, in December 1999, at long last to accept Turkey’s membership application.<sup>104</sup> Thus, 1999 was seen as a turning point in Turkey’s human rights performance, which had long blighted American–Turkish relations. Yet, in the final count, Turkey’s human rights practices never really endangered Turkey’s close association with the United States; Washington simply had too much at stake to risk losing Turkey’s friendship. The Administration was also willing to allow Turkey a great deal of leeway, settling for less than absolute and instant reform. Work in progress was quite enough to satisfy its liberal conscious, which was why in July 1999, the American Secretary of Defense, William Cohen, declared at a press conference in Ankara that he saw nothing to prevent the pending transfer of American arms to Turkey.

### Close allies – common ground

The manner in which the United States dealt with Turkey’s human rights records was, in many ways, representative of the nature of American–Turkish relations as a whole. Despite its disapproval of Turkey’s human rights policies, Washington, for whom Turkey in the 1990s was as important an ally as it had been in the days of the cold war, did not let its, often justified, reproofs stand in the way of close cooperation with Ankara. In like manner, Turkey, though often exasperated with United States’, to its mind, selfish and myopic policies, nevertheless continued to collaborate closely with Washington. Situated in a dangerous region and surrounded by potential foes, Ankara knew that its best hope for the future lay in cleaving as closely as possible to the United States. Moreover, the two countries had too much in common and too many joint interests at stake – including the need to curb Russia’s overweening influence in Central Asia; to stem Iranian fanaticism; to check Iraqi extremism; to end, or at least limit, the possible repercussions of the many political crises and ethnic wars in Central Asia and the Middle East; and to secure a regular energy supply – to allow petty, and sometimes not so petty, disagreements to come between them. As a result, both were careful not to let any differences of opinion overshadow their, hitherto, extremely fruitful association. They were ready, instead, to indulge in a little give and take in order to ensure that at the beginning of the twenty-first century their alliance remained as strong, as solid, and as effective as ever.

### Notes

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  - 5 Stephen J. Blank, "The Eastern Question Revived: Russia and Turkey Contend for Eurasia," paper presented in a conference on The Muslim Republics of the Former Soviet Union, Tel Aviv University, 12–14 October 1993, p. 25; Gareth Winrow, *Turkey and the Caucasus: Domestic Interests and Security Concerns*, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000, pp. 1, 19, 34.
  - 6 *New York Times*, reprinted in *Ha'aretz*, 3 December 1999.
  - 7 Necdet Pamir, "The Future Prospects of the Euroasian Corridor: Is there a Future?," paper presented at a conference on Building a Secure Eurasia in the 21st Century, Istanbul, 8–9 June 2000; James M. Dorsey, *Wall Street Journal*, 15 December 1997.
  - 8 Necdet Pamir, "The Future Prospects of the Euroasian Corridor: Is there a Future?"
  - 9 Cumhur Ersumer, Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, *Milliyet*, 23 May 2000; *Sabah*, 24 May 2000; Robert O. Freedman, "Russia's Middle East Ambitions," *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 3, September 1998, p. 32.
  - 10 *Ibid.*
  - 11 Freedman, "Russia's Middle East Ambitions," p. 32; Winrow, *Turkey and the Caucasus*, p. 45; Suha Bolukbasi, "The Controversy over the Caspian Sea Mineral Resources: Conflicting Perceptions, Clashing Interests," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 3, 1998, p. 403; Greek Ministry of Press and Mass Media, Secretariat General Information, *Greece: Your Strategic Partner in the New Millennium*, Athens, Ministry of Press and Mass Media, 1999, p. 64.
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  - 13 Guclu, "Regulation of the Passage through the Turkish Straits," pp. 127–128.
  - 14 For information on the Bosphorus hazards see Brent Sasley, "Turkey Energy Politics in the Post-Cold War Era," *MERIA Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1998; Yuksel Inan, "The Current Regime of the Turkish Straits," *Perceptions*, Vol. 6, No. 1, March–May 2001, p. 114; Douglas Frantz, "The Busy Bosphorus is Likely to Get Even Busier," *New York Times*, 28 January 2001.
  - 15 Stephen Kinzer, "Turks Fearful of an Oil Disaster as the Bosphorus Gets Busier," *MERIA Seminar: New York Times on Oil Transport through the Bosphorus*, 11 January 1998; Sasley, "Turkey Energy Politics in the Post-Cold War Era." See also Inan, "The Current Regime of the Turkish Straits," pp. 99–116; Guclu, "Regulation of the Passage through the Turkish Straits," pp. 117–134.
  - 16 Douglas Frantz, "The Busy Bosphorus is Likely to Get Busier," *New York Times*, 28 January 2001.
  - 17 Harun Kazaz, *TDN*, 17 January 1998; Kinzer, "Turks Fearful of an Oil Disaster as the Bosphorus Gets Busier."
  - 18 Guclu, "Regulation of the Passage through the Turkish Straits," p. 133.
  - 19 For information on the risks navigating the Straits see Sasley, "Turkey Energy Politics in the Post-Cold War Era"; Inan, "The Current Regime of the Turkish Straits," p. 114; Frantz, "The Busy Bosphorus is Likely to Get Busier"; Guclu, "Regulations of the Passage through the Turkish Straits," p. 127 .
  - 20 ARI Movement, CD ROM on the "Perils of Oil Transport through the Turkish Straits," *MERIA Turkishlist*, 16 November 1999.
  - 21 Inan, "The Current Regime of the Turkish Straits," p. 115; *Rapport Annuel sur le Mouvement des Navires a Traverser les Detroits Turcs, 1998, 62eme annee, 1998*, Ankara, 1999, pp. 49–52.

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- 24 Robert O. Freedman, "Russia's Middle East Ambitions," p. 38.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 G. Winrow, "Turkey and the Newly Independent States of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus," *MERIA Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 5, 15 June 1997.
- 27 Freedman, "Russia's Middle East Ambitions," p. 39.
- 28 Federico Pena, US Secretary of Energy, testimony before the US House of Representatives, International Relations Committee, 30 April 1998.
- 29 Ismail Cem, interview, *TDN*, 31 July 2000.
- 30 *Turkish Probe*, 11 April 1999; Robert W. Gee, Assistant Secretary of Energy for Policy and International Affairs, Testimony before the US House of Representatives, International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, Washington, DC, 12 February 1998.
- 31 Federico Pena, US Secretary of Energy, testimony before the US House of Representatives, International Relations Committee, 30 April 1998.
- 32 *Turkistan Newsletter*, Vol. 98:2–35 (1998).
- 33 Federico Pena, US Secretary of Energy, testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives, International Relations Committee, 30 April 1998.
- 34 *Turkish Probe*, 11 April 1999.
- 35 Federico Pena, US Secretary of Energy, testimony before the US House of Representatives, International Relations the Committee, 30 April 1998. When speaking to the Committee Pena underlined the fact that American oil companies "employ the world's highest environmental protection practices and technologies" which meant that "their involvement will help ensure that development in the Caspian region achieves a desirable balance between maximizing production and environmental stewardship." He alluded only in passing to the huge profits these companies stood to make.
- 36 Paul Michael Wihbey, "The Southern Eurasian Great Game," Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, Jerusalem, *IASPS Research Paper in Strategy*, Vol. 8 (1999), p. 14 (Hebrew).
- 37 There is an ongoing dispute between the Caspian Basin's five littoral states, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Iran, over the sovereign rights to the oil fields in the Caspian Sea. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan claim that the Caspian, a large inland sea, is in fact a lake, in which case, according to tradition and precedent, the littoral states must either divide its resources equally among them, and/or exploit them by mutual consent. In practice however, owing to these states' widely divergent national interests, neither option proved feasible. This being the case, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan argued that the sea underwater resources should be apportioned between the littoral states in the following manner: straight lines were to be drawn from the two outmost points of each state's coastline. These lines would continue out into the sea until they eventually diverge, dividing the Caspian Sea into various sized segments. Each country would have the rights to the oil within its portion of the sea. Iran and Russia insist that the Caspian is a sea and that under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, each littoral state owns the sea's resources within a 12-mile limit. It also possessed an exclusive economic zone for a further 200 miles. Moscow and Tehran claim ownership over the sea resources in a 4-mile area, beyond which they declare the resources of the Caspian must be shared. Their attitude is understandable given that their coastlines are relatively small so that they stand to gain much more if the Caspian is declared a sea rather than lake. See R.C. Longworth, "Destitute Plum of Caspian Has Many Suitors," *Chicago Tribune*, 9 February 1998; *Turkistan Newsletter*, Vol. 98:2-030, 17

- February 1998; *Turkistan Newsletter*, Business, Vol. 98:019, 2 March 1998; Suha Bolukbasi, "The Controversy over the Caspian Sea Mineral Resources," pp. 408–410; Sasley, "Turkey Energy Politics in the Post-Cold War Era."
- 38 The AIOC members are the United States' AMOCO, PENNZOIL, UNOCAL and Exxon oil companies; Britain's RAMCO and British Petroleum; Azerbaijan's SOCAR; Russia's LUKOIL; Norway's STATOIL; Saudi Arabia's DELTA, Japan's ITOCHU; and the Turkish Petroleum Corporation, TPAO.
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- 42 Rob Sobhani, "Where Happiness is Multiple Pipelines," *Washington Post*, 8 March 1998; Stephen Sestanovich, Ambassador-at-Large, Special Advisor to the US Secretary of State for the New Independent States, statement before the US House of Representatives, International Relations Committee, Washington, DC, 30 April 1998; Ambassador Richard L. Morningstar, Special Advisor to the President and the Secretary of State, statement before the House of Representatives, International Relations Committee, Washington, DC, 30 April 1998.
- 43 Starr, testimony before the US House of Representatives, 12 February 1998; Pamir, "The Future Prospects of the Euroasian Corridor."
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- 45 *TDN*, 17 May 1998.
- 46 *Turkistan Newsletter*, Vol. 98:2–044, 12 March 1998; *Izvestia*, 3 December 1997; *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 18 December 1997; Sestanovich's Statement, 30 April 1998.
- 47 Wihbey, "The Southern Eurasian Great Game," p. 15.
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# 6

## What the neighbor to the west says Greek–Turkish relations

It is only in a foreign Land that you can understand  
that Greeks are your long lost brothers.<sup>1</sup>

There is nothing quite like a good quarrel with the United States or a crisis with Turkey, *The Economist* once commented, to persuade the Greeks to support their government;<sup>2</sup> something the violent demonstrations during President Clinton's visit to Athens in November 1999 certainly confirmed. There is a seeming unanimity in Greece over their country's policies towards Washington and Ankara. However, unlike their uneasy, volatile relations with the United States, which tend to flare up at times of crisis, the Greeks are preoccupied with Turkey to the point of obsession. Their age-old conflict with their neighbor to the east absorbs them more than any other foreign policy issue. Considered a priority, Greek newspapers devote more column space to Turkey and related issues than to any of their European counterparts. Not so the Turkish press, which ranks the Greek–Turkish conflict only sixteenth in order of importance.<sup>3</sup>

It is a telling difference, representative of other spheres where the two countries differ in terms of their perception and response to events. Take, for example, the 1919–22 war. In Turkey, the war, which replaced the old Ottoman-Islamic loyalties with a new national consciousness, is seen as a war of liberation and patriotic resurgence.<sup>4</sup> In Greece, it is regarded as the greatest tragedy of modern times, a disaster, which wiped out 2000 years of Greek presence in Asia Minor. Yet, it is incontestable that the war also inspired Greek unity. Previously, in the absence of common shared experiences, such as a national effort or war, most Greeks in Greece were not even aware that they were Greek citizens. The war and the need to absorb the over 1 million Greek refugees, who had been forced to flee Asia Minor, engendered a strong sense of Greek national unity and patriotism.

The 1919–22 war is only one of three traumatic events, which underlie and feed Greece's negative, often violent, feelings towards Turkey. The other two are the fall of Constantinople, in 1453, and the partition of Cyprus in 1974.

Together, these three calamities delivered a severe and apparently final blow to the *Megali Idea* – the dream of a greater Greece embracing the “unredeemed” Greek and Hellenic lands in the Balkans, Asia Minor, the Aegean and Mediterranean seas – which had, over the years, provoked, an endless, often bloody irredentist conflict. It also accounts for Greece’s tendency to challenge Turkey’s integrity, embodied in the claim that as “As long as Constantinople is Istanbul, you don’t belong to our kind.” Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, has a special, symbolic place in Greek consciousness. Controversy over the city can even bring a basketball game to an abrupt conclusion, as happened in December 1996 when the match between Aris Thessaliniki and Besiktas ended when the Turkish team spotted Aris supporters brandishing a sign stating “Constantinople is the capital of Greece” and refused to return to court after the first half.<sup>5</sup>

Not that Turkey, at least according to Greece, lacks regional ambition. Greece is convinced that Turkey’s conquest of northern Cyprus is merely the first stage of a Turkish plan to impose a *Pax Turkana* in the Aegean and revive the Ottoman Empire.<sup>6</sup> Greece worries that, unless Turkey is stopped in its tracks, a process of regional *Finlandization* will soon take place with Greece’s defense and foreign policies, as well as its freedom of movement in the Aegean, Mediterranean and Ionian all being subject to Turkish consent and approval. Worse, Greece suspects that Turkish dreams go way beyond that of becoming a regional power and that Ankara seeks to wield power from the Adriatic to the China seas.

Turkey’s global ambitions apart, Greece has long quailed at the thought that Turkey might seek to deflect its internal troubles by provoking a quarrel with Greece.<sup>7</sup> The Greek horror of a communist onslaught faded in the 1960s, only to be replaced by growing fears of a potential Turkish threat, fed in part by Greece’s acute consciousness of its relative military weakness. The 1974 defeat in Cyprus, Athanassios Platias confessed, laid bare the fact that Greece had no deterrent or offensive capabilities, other than those provided by the United States and NATO. And, he pointed out, in Cyprus the latter conspicuously failed to come to Greece’s assistance.<sup>8</sup>

Matters did not improve with the end of the cold war. Turkey, or so Greece enviously believes, found its place in the new postwar system. The Soviet Union’s disintegration and the Persian Gulf’s inherent instability inflated its regional importance. Worse, Turkey’s goals and self-imposed roles in these and other areas, like the Balkans and Central Asia, have won the West’s approval. By contrast, Athens bemoans, Greece, despite being a rock in a sea of Balkan instability, conspicuously failed to elicit Western support. President George Bush senior certainly thought Greece of negligible worth. Not so Turkey, whom he prized greatly, which was probably why on 20 July 1991, the seventeenth anniversary of Turkey’s invasion of Cyprus – defined as “intervention” by Ankara – a sensitive date by all accounts, he tactlessly promised Turkey another F-16 assembly line.<sup>9</sup> Small wonder that Greece, forlorn and forsaken, has been forced, or so it feels, to become “a lone wolf.”

The end of the cold war, Athens felt, only magnified the Turkish threat. Previously, in order not to shift attention and resources away from its battle with the Soviet Union, the West took great pains to prevent Turkey from attacking Greece. This was no longer the case, and Greece could not depend on the West to protect it against Turkish aggression. Furthermore, the vacuum in the Balkans, following the collapse of communism, whetted Turkey's appetite and encouraged it to try and regain its former position in the region. Remember, thundered George Papandreou, Greece's Foreign Minister, that

Turkey has always justified its occupation of Cyprus by claiming that it was protecting the island's Muslim-Turkish population, and who is to say that this will not serve as a precedent for future escapades in the Balkans? Undoubtedly, Turgut Ozal's talk of a new rising Ottoman Empire offer little comfort to Greek ears.

Neither, it is worth adding, does Ankara's tendency to refer to the Albanian and Bosnian Muslims as "brothers" and "sisters."<sup>10</sup> Greece often complains that it is the only NATO country whose territorial integrity is threatened by a fellow NATO member, with Turkey, or so Greece alleges, seeking to encircle it east and west. Not content with having a huge state, which already dwarfs Greece in the east, Turkey, Greece accuses, with Muslim connivance, schemes to do the same in the west. A host of issues divide Greece and Turkey, many of which center on questions of territorial and maritime sovereignty. Turkey, for example, has threatened to go to war if Greece dare to expand its Aegean islands' territorial waters from 6 to 12 miles. In 1996, the Turkish Prime Minister, Tansu Ciller, pronounced 3,000 islands and islets in the Aegean, Turkish territory, warning that Ankara would consider any attempt by Athens to take these islands by force a *casus belli*. In late January 1996, the two countries nearly came to blows over the Imia/Kardak islets, a few miles off the Anatolian shore alongside the Dodecanese islands. As this the first time Turkey had called into question Greek sovereignty in Greek territory, it is hardly surprising that the incident rang alarm bells in Athens.<sup>11</sup> Equally worrying for Greece, is the fact that at an 80–100 percent degree of readiness, the Turkish forces stationed opposite the Greek Aegean islands are on higher alert than Turkey's other forces, which maintain only a 50 percent state of military readiness. Other points of Greek–Turkish contention include the fate of the Muslim Turkish minority in Greek Western Thrace, the rights to mine the minerals of the Aegean continental shelf, and control of the Aegean's air space.

But the biggest single Greek–Turkish dispute is Cyprus. As far as Greece is concerned the problem goes way beyond Turkey's occupation of the island's northern sector. Turkey's greater military power means that it can dictate Cyprus's future. Neither is this Turkey's only strategic advantage. Unlike Greece, which lies at a distance of 600 miles from Cyprus, Turkey is a mere 60 miles away. Turkey is also blessed with a much larger population than Greece – 65 million compared with 10 million – and so has virtually unlimited human resources at its disposal. Finally, Greece has to cope with the fact that its GNP is almost half



that of Turkey's, and, as Athanassios Platias rightly pointed out, "the smaller the GNP, the fewer the resources devoted to the output of military goods, even if the proportion of productive capacity so allocated is very high."<sup>12</sup>

The roll call of Greece's military disadvantages vis-à-vis Turkey is a long one. They include, other than those already mentioned, lack of strategic depth, lengthy and difficult to defend borders, the need to safeguard thousands of islands and islets scattered throughout Aegean, and population centers well within the range of Turkish artillery, all of which serves to tie up Greece defenses. Also Greece has inadequate road and rail networks, has only a short time to respond to a Turkish attack, especially in respect of the islands off the Turkish mainland, and there are no early warning systems registering Turkish incursions into Greek air space.<sup>13</sup>

The 1974 war in Cyprus encouraged Greece to rectify at least some of its military shortcomings. It established offensive units independent of NATO and expanded its navy and airforce, thus improving its ability to respond to Turkish threats and incursions. But, with 7 per cent of the national budget now devoted to defense needs, the burden on the Greek economy is heavy one. Indeed, with 4.8 percent of its GDP going to the army, Greece spends more on defense than any other NATO member. Turkey by comparison allots 4.4 percent of its GDP to defense. Five percent of Greece's labour force is employed in the military industry, again the highest percentage in NATO. And, Greece clearly means business, declaring that it will go to war should Turkey attempt to mine the Aegean's continental shelf's minerals to a depth of 200 meters or attack the Republic of Cyprus. Having stationing troops on the island which, acting as a tripwire, will ensure that a Turkish assault triggers an immediate and legitimate Greek response, demonstrates that Greece is all set to defend its rights.<sup>14</sup>

### **A war of words**

The Greek-Turkish conflict has unleashed a flood of extraordinarily emotive rhetoric on both sides of the Aegean. Greece has a tendency to describe the lands it lost to Turkey in erotic terms, talking of the rape of Greece and the defilement of virgin Greek territory. Vamik Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz have noted that the Greeks, who see the Turks as a lust-filled nation, often liken the fall of Constantinople to rape. They speak of the youthful and virile sultan, who tore a hole in the city's walls and seized the Byzantine capital. Over the centuries, the figure of a fallen woman or grieving widow, often venerated in folk songs and poems, came to symbolize the city, now known as Istanbul.

Emotions run high on either side of the Greek-Turkish divide. The irascible Greek Foreign Minister, Theodoros Pangalos, had been heard to say that "we will have nothing to do with Turkey. A man cannot discuss things with murderers, rapists and thieves."<sup>15</sup> The celebrated Greek author, Nikos Kazantzakis, swore that for the Greeks freedom means purging themselves of the corrupt

Turkish traits acquired under Ottoman rule.<sup>16</sup> The Greek Consul in Montreal took umbrage at a series of lectures held in a local university entitled: “Turkey: Two Millenniums of Art and History,” protesting that the Turkish nation “had settled in the region much later” and that most of the discoveries cited were a part of the Greek cultural heritage.<sup>17</sup>

Pangalos’s sacking in February 1999, following his part in the Ocalan fiasco – more of which later – prompted the *Turkish Daily News* to reprint the minister’s scurrilous remarks about Turkey, asserting that these

have ensured him a place in the history books. He has called the Turks “thieves, cut throats and sexual deviates”. He has claimed that the fact that “every Turkish woman wishing to enter the civil service must undergo a virginity test”, is proof that culturally Turkey is not European. Jacques Chirac’s championship of Turkey’s application to EU membership, led to him being compared to “the star of a beauty contest seeking to seduce the Turkish government”. Finally, accusing Washington of dragging its feet over Cyprus, Pangalos, branded Bill Clinton “a gross liar” and called upon Greek Americans to stop donating money to the presidential election campaign.

It is high time, the paper observed “that Pangalos pay the price of his choleric behaviour and that the Greek government rid itself of a Foreign Minister incapable of acting like a diplomat.” Diplomacy the *Daily News*, summed up “even when dealing with an arch rival cannot embrace those who refuse to accept its rules and, disseminating hatred, exhibit all the primitive emotions of a bankrupt statesman.”<sup>18</sup>

Clearly, Turkey, no shrinking violet, could prove equally vicious when it came to criticizing Greece. In May 1996, the Turkish Defense Minister, Oltan Sougourlou, while insisting that “nobody in Turkey harbors any hatred or animosity towards Greece,” let drop somewhat disingenuously that,

if anyone in Greece even dared to try to normalise relations with Turkey, he would be immediately accused of betraying his nation. What can one do with this kind of mentality. If we were to give them the whole of Turkey they would demand Central Asia. In World War II we rendered them every possible assistance, yet once the war was over, they exploited our naivete to secure various advantages in the Aegean.<sup>19</sup>

In December 1996, Tancu Ciller, Turkey’s Foreign Minister at the time, boasted that Greece’s fear of “our military might . . . is a well justified!” During a visit to Malaysia in August 1996, Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan bemoaned Turkey’s misfortune in “having Greece for a neighbor.” As for Pangalos’ insults, the Turkish Foreign Ministry, dismissed them as “impertinent . . . expressive of a psychopathological state of mind.”<sup>20</sup>

In such a loaded cultural and political atmosphere, awash with negative, even abusive images, the chances that the two countries’ relationship would improve appeared, at best, remote, at worst non-existent. Interviews with Greek and Turkish politicians, journalists, diplomats and soldiers confirmed this, rendering the prospect of a positive gesture, let alone compromise or concession, on the part of either, unlikely. Greek officials harped on the fact that Turkey

possesses the largest army in Europe and that Istanbul alone has more citizens than Greece. Their Turkish counterparts pointed out that these were the very two reasons why Europe and Greece did not attack and lop off Western Turkey. "Turkey," the Greek ambassador to Turkey, Dimitris Nezeretis, observed, upon leaving Ankara in February 1999, "is a *big and tough* country" and, he added, "I see no prospect of an improvement in Turco-Greek relations in the near future."<sup>21</sup> It would take something dramatic, even cataclysmic to provoke a conspicuous change in Greek-Turkish relations.

As chance would have it, something sensational did happen and only hours after the Nezeretis interview. Unfortunately, its immediate effect was to exacerbate Greek-Turkish relations even further. On 16 February 1999, Ankara announced the capture of Abdullah Ocalan. It also made public Greece's part in the affair, the Greek embassy in Nairobi having given shelter to the PKK leader. Nor was this all, as Ocalan's arrest revealed the scale of the political military and logistic help Athens extended the PKK. As a result, Greek-Turkish relations hit an all time low. Some compared the Ocalan affair and its reverberations to those of the 1919-22 Turkish-Greek war and the 1974 crisis in Cyprus. The Turkish press called upon the government to react as vigorously as it had in the past to this new instance of Greek aggression and provocation. It compared Greece's cooperation with the PKK to Syria's overt collaboration with the Kurdish underground organization. And, it urged the government to warn Athens that unless it stopped supporting the PKK, it would become the target of a Turkish military operation, an ultimatum that had already proved itself in Syria's case.

In order to strengthen its suit, the Turkish media published a plethora of material proving Greece's close association with the PKK. It revealed that police in Edrine, having interrogated Kurdish detainees, identified Lavrion, in the southeast of Athens and an unnamed camp 45 miles north of Athens as PKK indoctrination and recruitment centers. In 1993, the Greek government gave the PKK permission to establish a branch of the Kurdish Red Crescent Society in Athens, to provide medical help to Kurds wounded in the war with the Turkish army. Greece also allowed the PKK to set up an office in Athens under the name "The PKK Representation in Athens." In 1994, the PKK's political wing, the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK), opened an office in Athens, which was in effect a PKK financial as well as recruitment and training center. The office also printed and distributed the *Foni Tou Kurdistan* – The Voice of Kurdistan – and other subversive PKK publications. (In March 1997, the Kurdish publishing house, *KOMAL*, which was declared illegal in Turkey, resumed its activity in Athens). Finally, the PKK were able to collect a "revolutionary tax" from Kurdish asylum seekers in Greece, as in, for example, a camp at Patras.<sup>22</sup>

Not that the Turkish government needed any encouragement. Furious, Ankara demanded, no less, Pangalos's extradition for his part in the Nairobi affair. President Demirel, denouncing Greece as country that supports terrorism, and warned that Turkey may well launch a military strike against the PKK bases in Greece. Visa exemptions for Greek tourists were abolished and NATO

meetings between Turkish and Greek officers were held at junior levels only. Even Turkish businessmen refused to do business with Greece, and cancelled ongoing deals. Then, suddenly, within a few months everything changed. This time literally thanks to a cataclysmic event.

In August and September 1999 massive earthquakes hit both western Turkey and Athens. Greek and Turkish rescue missions instinctively rushed to each other's aid. People collected goods and donated money to help victims of the quake in both countries. Turkish and Greek newspapers paraded headlines such as "Brothers You Are Not Alone" and "Thank You Neighbor," and, what is more, in each other's language.<sup>23</sup> The changed atmosphere was as dramatic as it was remarkable, indicative of the marked difference between the governments' and the people's attitude. While the former traditionally, almost automatically, tended to adopt a tough and uncompromising stand, the latter proved, at least in times of crisis, sympathetic and compassionate. But, the earthquakes also, as will be seen, had an effect on the politicians, encouraging them to reconsider other less dramatic developments and put them in perspective, to the benefit of the two countries' relationship. There is little doubt that the earthquakes and their aftermath have engendered a positive climate in both Greece and Turkey, which augurs well for the future.

### **The Aegean and continental shelf**

In June 1995, Greece announced that, in accordance with the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, it intended to expand the territorial waters around the Greek Aegean islands from 6 to 12 miles. Turkey, which observes the 12 mile limit in the Mediterranean and Black seas, but maintains a 6 mile limit around its Aegean islands, warned Greece against doing any such thing. If, Turkey explained, all Greece's more than 2,000 islands acquired a 12 mile limit the Aegean would become a Greek lake. With 64 percent of the Aegean Greek and only 24 percents left to the high seas, Turkish ships on their way to the Mediterranean would be forced to sail through Greek waters.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, Turkey declared, if Greece went ahead with its plan, it would have no choice but to declare war.

According to Athens this particular quarrel goes back to the 1970s and Turkey's unflagging efforts to gain control of the Aegean. It points to Turkey's refusal, since 1974, to respect the Greek Aegean islands' air space and the Athenian Flight Information Region (FIR). Turkey counters this by pointing out that Greece has failed abysmally to fulfil its FIR responsibilities, noting sarcastically that "though it manages 7 percent of all air traffic in Europe, Greece is responsible for 30 per cent of all delays."<sup>25</sup> In August 1974, Ankara issued a Notice to Airman (NOTAM), number 714, which moved the information line for aircraft approaching Turkey several miles west of the previous Turkish Aegean FIR. As a result, most of Greece's Aegean islands suddenly found themselves east of the

new FIR line and under Turkish jurisdiction. Athens reacted strongly, exclaiming that the Aegean FIR was fixed by the International Civilian Aviation Organization in 1952 and that Turkey had no right to shift it. Athens also complained that Turkey had failed to observe the Greek islands' air space set at 10 miles. Recognizing only a 6 mile limit, the Turkish air force regularly violated the islands' air space. Unfortunately, interception attempts by the Greek air force have multiplied the danger of dogfights.

Turkish demands for a share in the Aegean continental shelf's mineral and oil reserves also exasperated Greece. The Turkish claim, Athens argued, contravened the Lausanne agreement of 1923, which awarded Greece the entire Aegean, other than the Turkish coast. Moreover, Greece is in desperate need of the shelf's mineral wealth, which contains its only oil field – in Prinos, southwest of the island of Thassos – though it, too, is running dry. In the 1980s Greece produced 1 million tons of oil a year, but by the 1990s this dropped to a paltry 600,000 tons.

In order to prove its charges of Turkish territorial and financial cupidity, Greece brandished an official Turkish textbook, published in 1997, which declares that the Aegean islands are an extension of the Anatolian continental shelf, thus insinuating that the islands have no continental shelf. Athens is equally sensitive to Turkey's insistence that the Aegean and its islands have always belonged to Anatolia, implying that Greek control of the islands is, at best, temporary. Then there is Tansu Ciller's claim to 3,000 islets and rocks, some of which are hundreds of miles from the Turkish coast, and most of which have been under Greek sovereignty since 1913. Quoting Turkey's own descriptions of itself as a regional power with interests throughout the Ionian Sea, Athens protested that it is subject to "Turkish territorial claims . . . ranging from the Evros river in northern Greece to the Aegean islands as far as Crete." Moreover, it accused, ever since 1995 Turkey has deliberately provoked crises in the Aegean in order to challenge Greece and impose its will on the area. Greece worries that it will find soon itself, in a regional version of *Finlandization*, "having to co-ordinate our defence and foreign policies with Ankara in an area ranging from the Aegean to the Ionian."<sup>26</sup>

Worse, Greece fears that Turkey will one day try to seize the islands by force. The fact that Turkey's Fourth Army – the Aegean Army – is stationed along Greece's borders serves only to augment Greek anxieties. Numbering 35,000 troops and equipped with landing craft, the Fourth Army is the second largest force in NATO, though independent of NATO. No less alarming is the deployment of Turkey's three other 650,000-strong armies. Turkey's First Army, stationed in Thrace, is a formidable military force, which lies only a stone's throw away from potential Greek targets. Turkey's Second Army, deployed in southeast Anatolia opposite Syria, Iraq and Iran, spends most of its time fighting the PKK and quelling insurgencies in the southeast. The Third Army is in charge of Turkey's eastern and Georgian frontiers.<sup>27</sup>

Greece, has to face this powerful military force with an army of less than 115,000 men. Its elite force – the Fourth Army Corps – is charged with defending

the Greek–Turkish borders in Thrace and the Aegean. The First and Second Army Corps – by far weaker – defend Greece’s northern frontier. The Second Army Corps is, however, in the process of becoming a rapid deployment force. The air force and navy maintain Greek air superiority and control of the Aegean.<sup>28</sup>

### The arms race

While most countries are intent on slashing their military budgets, Greece and Turkey are spending more money on arms than ever. Greece, currently imports 95 per cent of its military equipment, with only 5 per cent produced domestically, a dramatic fall from the 20 per cent figure of 1990. According to the Greek newsletter *COSMOS*, Greece has a long way to go before it achieves the target of a 50:50 imports and domestic production ratio set in the early 1990s.<sup>29</sup> The reason is simple, small countries like Greece find it extremely difficult to create a modern, efficient arms industry. Their diminutive domestic market renders the costs of production extraordinarily high. Nor is it, as Greece has discovered, always easy to cut expenditure by importing technology or using substitutes. As a result, in the few cases where Greek components were used, their added value was frequently well below the 40 per cent mark.<sup>30</sup>

Between the end of the 1990s and 2007, Athens means to spend some 16 billion dollars on arms. It will acquire 35 percent of these weapons from the United States, much less than the 80 percent it purchased in 1974. Greece’s extensive shopping list includes, AWACS, early warning aircraft, fighter jets, helicopters, transport planes, pilot training systems, upgraded F-4 phantoms and tanks, anti-aircraft systems, submarines, capital warships, torpedoes, corvettes, and missile boats. Greece also plans to improve its military capabilities in such critical areas as command control, communications, computing, intelligence and information warfare, the conduct of extended military operations, air and sea control, armour-based fire-power support, air defenses, and troop endurance and survival ability, all of which cost money too. Finally, according to Andre Gerolymatos, Greece is in the process of replacing the division, as the organizational unit of command, with brigades and battalions, which will enhance the army, navy and air force’s ability to function as a single integrated force. It will also improve mobility, essential if Greece is to cope with the multiple Turkish threat.<sup>31</sup>

Turkey military spending program calls for 150 billion dollars to be expended in the first quarter of the twenty-first century alone. Ankara justifies this mind-boggling sum by pointing to, among other things, Greece’s huge defense bill, noting that proportionally it is the highest in NATO. Turkey’s land forces will receive 60 billion dollars, with which they will buy 48,564 wheeled vehicles, 750 helicopters, 3,627 main battle tanks, 1,951 guns and howitzers, 180 rocket and missile systems, 150 anti-tank rockets, and 12 remote control air vehicles. The navy will get 25 billion with which to purchase 38 helicopters, 35 landing vehicles,

25 auxiliary class ships and vehicles, 16 patrol ships, 15 guided assault boats, 14 frigates, 12 corvettes, 9 submarines, 4 anti-mine ships, 4 mine sweepers, and 1 communications ship. The air force, allotted the sum of 65 billion dollars, will acquire 640 fighter jets, 442 air defense weapons systems, 160 training aircraft, 79 operations planes, 68 transportation planes, and 25 helicopters.<sup>32</sup>

The vast amounts Greece and Turkey plan to spend on arms mean that they are in effect mortgaging their future. There is little doubt that the citizens of both countries would much prefer it if these gargantuan sums were used to finance various essential civilian projects. Certainly in Turkey there have been calls – which have grown louder since Ocalan’s capture and the effective end of the war against the PKK – to devote more money to the country’s twenty-six eastern and southeastern war-torn provinces. Local businessmen have already taken steps to relieve the region’s economic plight. Firms, owed money by Iraq, money they have little chance of seeing, banded together to set up a company that will import oil – to the tune of 7 million tons – from Iraq in lieu of the Iraqi debt. This, Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, waxed enthusiastically, will help kick start the local economy because on average, as he calculated, over the next two and half years, 500 fuel tankers will arrive daily in Turkey and 15,000 vehicles will be put to work. “Given that each vehicle employs 20 people this means 300,000 jobs,” he declared. Moreover, Ecevit hoped that Turkey would gain transportation revenues, companies would increase their profits and the state’s tax revenue would grow. Iraq would also benefit and would purchase with its oil revenues local merchandise, thus stimulating business in Turkey’s southeast.<sup>33</sup> The government in Ankara, sensitive to public opinion, also did its bit to help. Ecevit promised 100 million dollars in aid. Factories in the region were offered long-term low-interest loans, tax exemptions, and generous reductions in the price of electricity. The government announced that it would award displaced Kurdish villagers grants to encourage them to return home, and, Ecevit proudly proclaimed, 1,000 families had already taken advantage of this offer. Finally, the government promised to triple its investment in the east and southeast.

Yet, impressive as this is, it is far from enough. The number of displaced persons in the region is thought to be 4 million. Unemployment has reached the 3 million mark. Farmers, whose numbers have been reduced by 75 percent, have been particularly hard hit. Fifty-three schools, accommodating 20,000 children, were planned for 1999, with another 72,000 children to be provided for the following year. On the industrial front, there are plans for eleven official industrial zones expected to create 32,000 new jobs. Also in the pipeline are eleven power-producing and transmission facilities plus four portable power plants, each capable of generating 75 megawatts of electricity. The sums needed for these and other similar projects are estimated at 1.8 billion dollars per annum.<sup>34</sup> It must be said that this massive figure is dwarfed by the vast amount, 80 billion dollars according to official Turkish sources, Turkey has spent battling with the PKK. Some, however, claim this to be a laughably conservative estimate and that the real outlay was 7–15 billion dollars a year, which over the

fifteen years of the PKK insurrection (1984–99), adds up to the incredible sum of 225 billion dollars.<sup>35</sup>

Offsetting these urgent domestic needs is the reluctance of various interested parties in Turkey, particularly within the military industrial field, to cut their budgets and surrender the rich pickings afforded by continued military spending. Money is also needed to pay for the damage wrought by the 1999 earthquake. The earthquake had a disastrous effect on Turkey's economy, 35 percent of the country incurring some form of damage. Turkey's industrial and commercial sectors were particularly hard hit, suffering losses of 42.5 percent and 34.6 percent, respectively. Given the urgent need to revive Turkey's economy, it is unlikely that the southeast will receive the money it needs. Yet, even the desperate need to allocate money to reconstruct Turkey's quake-stricken areas has failed to persuade the military to reduce its budget: most of the weapon procurement plans have survived the earthquake largely intact. The 2000 military budget was set 7.6 billion dollars or 8.8 percent of the annual budget, a negligible change from 1999. Aware that since the winter of 2001 Turkey has been facing a severe economic crisis, the military has agreed to postpone, at least temporarily, its 19.5 billion dollar modernization program. It is worth noting that the army believes that the 150 billion dollars earmarked for buying weapons, falls *far short* of Turkey's real needs. Surely, this figure will, despite promises to spread the arms purchases over several years, hamper efforts to curb Turkish inflation. And, this, together with all the other urgent economic exigencies it faces, should give the government pause for thought; it might be that the Turkish–Greek thaw might after all result in the transfer of monies from military to civil needs.<sup>36</sup>

In Greece, too, the government has, following the thaw in Greek–Turkish relations, faced pressure to cut military expenditure and divert the money thus saved into vital domestic programs. At the time, the Greek government was well aware that Greece was the only EU country that had failed, owing to its poor economic performance, to join the European Monetary Union (EMU), and was anxious to improve its economic management and meet EMU standards. Greece was to become an associated member of the EMU in March 2000; full membership was to follow in 2001. Eventually, Athens did join the EMU. But before accession, few conditions had first to be fulfilled, among them that the drachma's exchange rate was to remain stable for at least two years. Indeed, Greece did achieve an impressive number of fiscal and economic achievements – inflation has fallen from 15 percent in 1993 to under 4 percent in 1999; the country's fiscal deficit in the late 1990s, was slightly above 8.8 percent, a marked improvement on 1993's 13.7 percent (but still far from the EU 3.7 percent); the 1996 growth rate showed a 2.6 percent upward trend, well above that of the EU; in 1998, there was a 10 percent increase in public and private investment as opposed to 4.5 percent for the EU. Still, Greece had some way to go before it conformed to EMU norms. It had to reduce inflation to around 2.5 percent; improve its debt:GNP ratio, which though it had fallen from 105.5 percent in



1996 to 100.7 percent at the end of 1998, was still among the highest in the EU; reduce the textile and agriculture sectors' share in the country's GNP, which at 21 percent was much larger than that of other EMU members (agriculture accounts for 2.4 per cent of the EU's entire GNP); and curtail cotton production in line with EU policy (fast replacing other crops, cotton has become a growth industry of vital importance to the Greek economy). Greece had also to cut the prime interest rate from 10.75 per cent to 3 per cent as in other EMU countries.<sup>37</sup> As noted, in 2001 the country did become a party to the EMU, and complied with its standards; presumably, the Greek–Turkish thaw enabled the transfer of monies from military to civil ends.

In view of the above it is tempting to think that these urgent economic demands may ultimately persuade Greece and Turkey to divert money from the military to much needed domestic projects. This, in turn, may help alleviate Greek–Turkish tensions. In any case, awareness of the need to cut their military budgets may well have prompted both sides to start negotiating with one another.

### The United States

Athens' criticisms of the United States boil down to two closely related complaints: the Americans' total disregard of the historic basis of many of Athens' claims and their unwavering pro-Turkish stance. Athens is convinced that the Republican Party traditionally and instinctively favors Turkey over Greece. Certainly the Bush senior administration has proved itself a particular Greek bugbear, while Greece has no doubt that Bush junior will follow in the footsteps of his father.

Greece claims that as a young nation, the United States has absolutely no sense of history. As far as the Americans are concerned the past began in 1945, which is one reason, why they find it so difficult to understand Greece's quarrel with FYROM over the right to the name Macedonia – Greece insists upon calling the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), underlining *its sole historic claim* to the name Macedonia.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, having burst onto the international stage in 1945 and at the outset of the cold war, the United States found Turkey to be a much more valuable ally than Greece, particularly in its battle against the Soviet Union and communism. This bias continued well into the late 1980s and 1990s. In order to secure Turkish cooperation during the Gulf war, Washington put the Cyprus dispute on hold. Ignoring Greece's insistence on the strong parallels between Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and Turkey's acting likewise in Cyprus, President Bush announced that Cyprus would not be included in the American search for peace in the Middle East. The dispute in Cyprus would be turned over to the UN instead, which effectively meant deferring the solution to the crisis perhaps indefinitely. The United States justified its decision to abandon Cyprus, which was particularly jarring in light of its relentless efforts to resolve the Arab–Israel and Balkan conflicts, by pointing out that while the

Arabs and Israelis had exhibited a willingness to negotiate, such was not the case with Greece and Turkey.

The question of American military aid to Greece and Turkey has also led to Greek protests of unequal treatment and pro-Turk bias. In 1980, Greece finally persuaded Congress to pass a series of laws, guaranteeing Greece 7 dollars worth of military equipment for every 10 dollars of equipment Turkey obtained. But, Athens suspected that the White House, unhappy with this development, was simply waiting for the opportunity to revoke this ratio. In 1991 its forebodings were realized when, following the Gulf War, Washington effectively quashed the 7:10 ratio. It awarded Turkey a sizeable grant, while Greece had to be satisfied with a considerably smaller loan. It also sold Turkey far more sophisticated weapons than anything Greece possessed. True, the 7:10 ratio was reinstated in July 1991, but it has since, owing to Greece's and Turkey's massive arms procurement programs, largely fallen by the wayside.<sup>39</sup>

To Greece's dismay the Democratic Clinton Administration proved no better than its Republican predecessor, keeping up a steady flow of arms to Turkey to the tune of 800 million dollars per year, or 4.6 billion dollars in its first six years in office. In 1997, the path was cleared for Boeing and Bell Textron to bid for a 4 billion dollar contract to sell Ankara 145 advanced attack helicopters.<sup>40</sup> By the end of the 1990s, Turkey had become one of the United States' major arms buyers, second only to such favored clients as Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Israel and Egypt.

Given the above, Athens concluded that the United States has always, and possibly will always, side with Turkey against Greece. Ocalan's capture clinched matters. "Nobody," railed Pangalos, Athens' soon to be dismissed Foreign Minister, "Believes that the Kenyans handed Ocalan over to the Turks. There were" he said, hinting that the United States had taken an active part in Ocalan's capture, "some very big, blond men involved in the affair." Other less vicious minds agree that the United States, which had long regarded Greece as a trial and a nuisance, sent agents to help Turkey seize Ocalan, but only because it wanted to prevent Turkish retaliatory action *against* Greece. This made little difference to Pangalos who, unrepentant, continued to upbraid the United States: "some people in the United States want its friends to constantly say 'yes'. Well though a friend of the American people, I refuse to be anyone's slave."<sup>41</sup>

The assistance rendered Turkey by the Jewish and Israeli lobbies in the United States has also made life hard for Greece, which in any case finds it difficult to promote its cause in Washington. Not that life in Washington is easy for Turkey either. Ironically, Nuzret Kandemir, Turkey's Ambassador to the United States, has claimed that the toughest part of his nine-year stint in Washington was his battle against the Greek, Greek-Cypriot, Kurdish and Armenian lobbies. Working in Washington, Kandemir sighed, "is like taking an exam."<sup>42</sup>

## Cyprus

Cyprus is the principal source of Greek–Turkish enmity. The two countries’ hold utterly conflicting views of the island’s past, present and future, and particularly of the 1974 crisis. Greece believes that Turkish nationalism – a relatively new phenomenon dating from 1923 – feeds upon expansionist *démarches*, like that of Cyprus in 1974. It is convinced that Turkey regards Cyprus as a bridgehead for further territorial expansion. Consequently, Greece reasons, it has no choice but to fortify Cyprus’s remaining Greek portions. Turkey, for its part, insists that its intervention in 1974 was a rescue mission, born of its commitment to the welfare of fellow Muslims and nationals, whom the Orthodox world seeks to eradicate.

Greece dismisses Turkey’s account of its actions, pointing out that, having conquered the island’s northern portion, it then set about altering its demographic make-up by settling Anatolian Turks in the area under its control, and, Greece protests, on land belonging to the some 250,000 Cypriot Greeks, who had been forced to abandon their homes in 1974. (There are currently less than 500 Greek Cypriots left in Turkish Cyprus.) This settlement policy, Greece claims, is particularly insidious, as the Cypriot Turks have long maintained a separate identity and culture from their mainland cousins. They may share a language and religion, but, even here, there are subtle differences between the two. According to Greek sources at 114,000 the mainland settlers greatly outnumber the Cypriot Turks, who total a mere 88,000.<sup>43</sup> This glaring imbalance owes much to the fact that since 1974 a large number of the island’s Turkish inhabitants have left for Britain and Malta, while over 80,000 mainland Turks have immigrated to northern Cyprus. It is a case, Greece complains, of “a Turk leaves and a Turk comes.” The result is that while in 1960, Cyprus’s Turkish population numbered 160,000, by 1998, that number rose, according to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), to 198,000. The Turkish Cypriot daily newspaper, *Avrupa*, further disclosed that 70 percent of the TRNC’s bank employees, 75 percent of its restaurant owners and 90 percent of its jewelry-shop owners are Turkish settlers.<sup>44</sup> These figures, Athens remarks snidely, entitle the TRNC “to inclusion in the Guinness Book of Records,” as despite the wholesale emigration of the Cypriot Turks the island’s Turkish population just keeps on growing and growing.<sup>45</sup>

Greece also accuses Turkey – an accusation Turkey vehemently denies – of sending the “Grey Wolf,” a hard-line nationalist paramilitary youth organization (*Bozkurt*) to Cyprus. These thugs, Greece charges, took part in the summer of 1996 in a number of violent incidents along the border separating Greek from Turkish Cyprus. According to George Papandreou, the Grey Wolves were also implicated in the forest fires that raged throughout December 1996 on several Greek islands including Cyprus.<sup>46</sup>

Turkey has a 35,000-strong expeditionary force on Cyprus. The Eleventh Army Corps, part of Turkey’s Second Army based in Malatya, Turkey, is a

formidable military force. Commanded by a Lieutenant General, it consists of two infantry divisions, the Twenty-eighth and Thirty-ninth, plus an independent armored brigade, the Fourteenth, which has at its disposal over 100 first-class tanks, approximately 100 personnel carriers cum fighting vehicles, and self-propelled artillery. Then there is the indigenous Turkish Cypriot force numbering some 5,000 men, who serve as light infantry.<sup>47</sup> According to Greece, the Turkish expeditionary force has its own agenda, often quite different and as a rule more hard line than Ankara's. Enjoying a great deal of leeway, the Eleventh Army Corps, Greece inveighs, behave in much the same way as the Japanese did in Manchuko during the 1930s.<sup>48</sup>

The island's Greek sector is also awash with soldiers – the Republic of Cyprus vies with Israel and Lebanon for the title of the world's most heavily armed region – charged with defending it against further Turkish incursions. However, given that the Greek portion of Cyprus is only a few minutes' flight away from Turkey, but 600 miles away from Greece, this is no simple task. The logistical problems are immense and in an attempt to overcome them, Greece decided, among other things, to station Soviet-made anti-aircraft missiles – worth some 500 million dollars – on the island and thus safeguard the aerial corridor between Greece and Cyprus. But, Ankara, drawing attention to the fact that with a range of 150 miles these missiles could easily penetrate Turkish air space, insisted that the missiles were offensive rather than defensive weapons and threatened to go to war should Greece proceed as planned. To prove their point, Turkish sources quoted Theodore Pangalos's boast that “the Greek Cypriots ordered only 38 missiles, which, if used, will eventually destroy only 38 Turkish aircraft.”<sup>49</sup>

Turkey's fierce reaction, and the prospect of a new Greek–Turkish imbroglio, persuaded Athens and the Republic of Cyprus to reconsider the matter. Eventually, after much acrimonious discussion, they decided to station the missiles in Crete, 500 kilometers from the TRNC – which is thus well within the missiles' radar range – but 150 kilometers from the Turkish nearest coast. The missiles, owned by the Republic and manned by Greek Cypriots trained in Russia, would be under mainland Greek command. Turkey, however, was far from satisfied. Condemning the decision as “inadmissible,” it warned Greece that it was making “a huge mistake.”

According to Athens, it decided to redeploy the missiles, mainly because the “conflict in Cyprus and particularly its militarization, consistent with Ankara's thinking, works to Turkey's advantage.” Hence, Greece must focus upon politicizing the problem. It is why, for example, the government explained, the Republic's accession to the EU is a priority. Unfortunately, this meant, the government then pointed out, that it had to abandon the plan to station the S-300 missiles on Cyprus. Neither the EU nor NATO would welcome into their ranks a country embroiled in military conflict, that has weapons systems which may provoke a Turkish attack, and that employs Russian technicians to maintain them. One need only listen to NATO's – whose code name for the missiles is

Grumble – mutterings that had the missiles been stationed in Cyprus their radar systems, manned by Russians, would have been able to monitor NATO aircraft flying over the Balkans.

These explanations failed to convince, let alone appease the Greek government's right-wing and opposition critics. Branding it as "the greatest humiliation Hellenism has suffered," they saw the decision to redeploy the missiles as proof of Greece's military weakness – some said helplessness – vis-à-vis Turkey. Greek right-wingers were similarly vociferous when Turkey grabbed Ocalan outside the Greek embassy in Nairobi, denouncing the government as "a government of Quislings" and hinting at high-level collaboration. The whole point of the missiles, opposition circles exclaimed, was to convince Turkey of the effectiveness of the Greek-Cypriot Unified Defence Doctrines (UDD). By removing them, and surrendering Greece's long-range capability, the government had achieved precisely the opposite, proving to the Turks that the UDD is utterly worthless. Moreover, the S-300 deployment, intended to add "a sharp edge to the UDD's strategic bargaining power, backfired badly," because, yet again, "Athens and Nicosia were oblivious to Turkey's well known and violent objection to any form of military bluffing."<sup>50</sup> Yet, whatever the government's critics might think, it is clear that the S-300 scheme failed to deter Turkey, who went ahead anyway and threatened Cyprus. Neither was Ankara highly impressed by the growing military ties between Greece and the Republic of Cyprus. But these very contacts, like Athens's growing military investments in the island, specifically sought to deter Turkey.<sup>51</sup>

Paradoxically, the S-300 affair signalled the onset of a more positive era in Greek-Turkish relations. It drove home to Greece the fact of Turkey's superior military strength. At the same time, the Greek decision to redeploy the missiles, thus rendering the UDD less of a threat, removed one of the many barriers to a rapprochement between the two countries. Furthermore, by forcing the two countries to talk rather than confront each other, it helped ease Greek-Turkish tensions in general. Finally, in Ankara, officials, well aware that Athens had yielded to Turkish might, felt sufficiently confident to consider the possibilities of a *détente*. When within a few months Greece once again bent to Turkish pressure, this time over Ocalan, both sides were ready to embark upon the earthquake-inspired diplomacy of August-September 1999.

### **Cyprus and the European Union**

Highlighting Ankara's threats to annex the TRNC if the Republic of Cyprus is admitted to the EU, Greece accuses Turkey of blackmail. Greece claims that Turkey will consider letting the Republic enter the EU only if it is allowed to join the organization first. Turkey vehemently denies this and insists that its opposition is based purely upon the 1960 Cypriot constitution, which states clearly that Cyprus cannot subscribe to any organization, including the EU, that does not

include Greece and Turkey; an argument that raises the suspicion that Greece is right and Turkey is angling for EU membership. Greece, which ardently supports the Republic's application for EU membership, retorts that the current state of affairs in the island has rendered at least this part of the constitution irrelevant. The constitution, it explains was designed to prevent *Enosis* – the unification of Greece and Cyprus – not block the island's membership of international bodies. Besides, asks Greece, how come a state, that is to say Turkey, “that has broken a treaty can invoke that treaty for the purposes that suit her. Partition [of Cyprus since 1974] . . . is one breach. Recognition of the state that is consequent of partition [the TRNC] is a second breach.”<sup>52</sup> As if blackmail were not enough, Greece also credits Turkey with deliberately and artificially exacerbating the situation in Cyprus in the hope that the EU will balk at admitting to its ranks a country engaged in a fierce ethnic dispute.

The Austrian precedent is not a more convincing case as far as Ankara is concerned. The Austrian State Treaty of 1955 prohibited union between Austria and Germany, in the same way as the 1960 treaties in regards to Cyprus specifically negated *Enosis* between Greece and Cyprus. Yet, in 1995 Austria was allowed entry into the EU, thus establishing an indirect union between Vienna and Berlin. Why should not Cyprus be allowed to do the same, asks the Hellenic world? The Turkish reply is clear: in the 1960 Cypriot Treaty of Guarantee, each community has a veto over membership of international organizations unless Greece and Turkey are parties to it, which is not the case with the EU where only Greece is a member. In the Austrian case *all* the parties to the Austrian State Treaty agreed to Austria joining the EU, even Russia, which in 1955 insisted on avoiding repetition of the *Anschluss*. “If states all agree to interpret their treaty in a particular way, or to waive a breach of the treaty that is fine. But this is not the case here because one of the parties to the [Cypriot] treaty, Turkey, does not agree.”<sup>53</sup>

Whatever the truth behind the Greek accusations, it is worth noting that one of the reasons Turkey objects to “Greek Cyprus” admission – the Turkish riposte to Athens and Nicosia’s “the so-called TRNC” or, more generally, “the pseudo state;” Greece also tends to girdle its references to TRNC officials with inverted commas, for example, “the Prime Minister of the pseudo state” – is that the EU would then have two anti-Turkish Greek states. Worse, the Republic's admission but not the TRNC's will, Turkey fears, fix once and for all, at least in Europe's eyes, the border between the Hellenic and Turkic worlds. Warning that the accession of a divided Cyprus will cause an irreparable breach between Turkey and Europe, Ankara insists that the EU will not discuss Cyprus's admission until certain conditions are met. It further demands that the EU treat the Republic and TRNC equally, as two independent states.<sup>54</sup>

Not that Ankara is overjoyed at the prospect of the TRNC joining the EU. Indeed, the possibility that the TRNC will become a member of the EU as part of a process at the end of which the entire island will join the EU, has provoked a great deal of acrimony, this time between Turkey and the TRNC. Ankara insists that the Cypriot Turks join the EU only after Turkey, to which the TRNC

has retorted that Ankara cannot keep on treating it like a baby, that the two countries are equals, and that it should be treated as such. This truculent response is somewhat surprising, given that, except for Turkey, the TRNC is boycotted by the rest of the world, and its economy is totally dependent on Turkey's. The TRNC's annual inflation is 58 percent and it has 4,000 dollars GDP per person; the Greek Cypriot Republic boasts a 4.8 percent inflation and 14,000 dollars GDP per person.<sup>55</sup> In any case the prospect of the TRNC joining the EU as part of a package deal is at present non-existent, which makes the passions the issue arouses all the more extraordinary.

### Cyprus's future

Greece's solution to the Cyprus imbroglio – a bizonal, bicomunal state with both the Greek majority and Turkish minority enjoying equal political rights – is far removed from Turkey's vision of the island's future. Greece, for one, is convinced that Turkey, seeking to consolidate its control over the TRNC, has absolutely no interest in reuniting Cyprus. Nor is it in any hurry to resolve the conflict, given that with every passing day its links with the TRNC grow stronger and more extensive, while the prospect of unification retreats into the distance. Certainly, Ankara, despite some 1,000 ethnically based incidents per year, hails Cyprus as a shining example of a conflict in which partition produced stability, though not admittedly tranquillity. But, counters Greece, it is a false stability, totally dependent on the UN troops' success in separating the two communities.

Turkey's policy on Cyprus hinges, Greece believes, on two external, extraneous considerations. The first, pan-Turkism, predisposes Ankara to shun any compromise for fear of prejudicing its ties with Muslim or ethnic Turk elements in the Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia. The second, and more important issue, already mentioned, is the EU, and Turkey's insistence on holding the island hostage to its ambition to join the EU. Turkey will only, Greece contends, abandon its uncompromising stand on the dispute if admitted to the EU.

Just as Greece accuses Turkey of neo-Ottomanism and dreams of a new Ottoman Empire, Ankara reproaches Greece with wanting to revive the Byzantine Empire. Athens's prospective empire, Turkey avers, will embrace the entire Aegean, and its capital will be Istanbul – the much coveted and sorely missed Constantinople. In line with its ambitions Greece, or so Turkey claims, is intent upon dispossessing the Cypriot (and Thracian) Turks. As evidence, it points to Greece's tendency to refer to the island's Turks as "Muslimized Greeks," which certainly smacks of colonial inclinations.<sup>56</sup> Turkey and the TRNC fear that once Cyprus is unified the island's Greek majority, adopting the policies of their mainland compatriots, will seek to suppress the identity of the Cypriot Turk minority.

Turkey finds the Greek goal of *Enosis* equally unacceptable, and sees no reason to assume that Greece has abandoned that, to its mind, iniquitous idea, which has led to the mass murder of hundreds of Cypriot Turks. In fact, Ankara

claims, once Cyprus is unified and the proponents of *Enosis* prevail, there is every chance of history repeating itself. Nor has Turkey much faith in EU ability to safeguard the island's Turks, given its poor record in preventing the slaughter of Muslims. Who is to say, Ankara contends, that what happened in Bosnia, where Orthodox Serbs massacred innocent Muslims under the impassive eyes of EU troops, will not take place in a unified Cyprus, whether it joins the EU or not. Only this time it will be a case of Orthodox Greeks killing Muslim Turks.

The Cypriot Turks insist that in 1974, they, with Turkey's assistance, acted wholly in self-defense. They point out that there is not a single Turkish family on the island who has not lost at least one of its members to Greek violence. But, declared Rauf Denktas, the TRNC's president, when interviewed by an Israeli journalist, "we will survive just as you survived the Holocaust," leaving the journalist with the distinct impression "that Hitler and Greece retain an overwhelming presence in the TRNC."<sup>57</sup> Not that the Cypriot Turks are the only ones to have suffered. The Republic of Cyprus's museums are full of horrifying pictures of savagely beheaded Greek-Cypriot children. It would thus appear that the principal barriers to a settlement in Cyprus are fear and mistrust. At present, the Cypriot Turks swear that only mainland Turkey can guarantee their safety. The Greek Cypriots deny this, and demand the withdrawal of the 35,000-strong Turkish force as well as the return of some territory currently in the hands of the TRNC.<sup>58</sup> The Cypriot Turks reject this demand, emphasizing that unlike Turkey, Greece has no legitimate claim to Cyprus. After all, they observe, the island was under Ottoman not Greek sovereignty for 300 years, adding that Turkey would find it insupportable to lose a second territory in the island, in addition to the southern part already lost to the Greeks.<sup>59</sup>

Cyprus is a typical post-cold war conflict, a mixture of ethnic and religious questions which, together with historical undercurrents and external intervention, combine to create a complex and unwieldy problem. The fact that partition apparently works, and calm prevails, renders a satisfactory solution to the affair all the more difficult. However, if Turkey does eventually soften and agree to a compromise settlement, it will probably come in the form of a confederal Cyprus, perhaps a loose federation whose Turkish part will receive maximum autonomy, practically verging on sovereignty, and whose security will be guaranteed by the physical presence of Turkish troops. Not a minority, not a community while the other side enjoys the status of a state, not a weakened party to a federation, but a separate, equal and legitimate entity within a confederation – this is the mantra of the Turkish side to the conflict.<sup>60</sup> As Ismail Cem, Turkey's Foreign Minister, explained: "We want Cyprus to continue as a political entity, even if it is called the Confederation of the United States of Cyprus. But, the Turks must never be deprived of their right to govern themselves."<sup>61</sup> In return Turkey will expect to be admitted to the EU. The Cypriot Turks recent admission that they are willing to drop their demand to be recognized as an independent entity, if, in return, the international community



acknowledges that the Republic neither speaks for nor represents them, did not signal a deviation from this basic Turkish stance.

According to Ersin Kalaycioglu, any settlement in Cyprus must meet several basic conditions. First, Greece and Turkey must abandon their claims to *Enosis* and *Taksim* (partition) respectively. Second, the Turkish minority must be granted equal political and sovereign rights. Third, there must be some kind of mechanism, which guarantees the Turkish minority's safety. Fourth, the TRNC's share of the island must shrink from the current 37 per cent to a size commensurate with its population. Fifth, several areas must be reserved for the re-settlement of refugees, while bearing in mind the situation in Cyprus since 1974. Sixth, all foreign troops must withdraw from Cyprus. Seventh, the island must be demilitarized, with only a police force left to keep order. Once these provisions are satisfied, negotiations for a final settlement can begin. In the course of the negotiations for, preferably, a united, federal republic, Turkey, Kalaycioglu argues, should – in light of the Greek Orthodox Church's past history and in order to curtail any *Enosis*-inspired zeal – insist upon a secular constitution. Only then may the newly established Federal Cypriot Republic start to negotiate its accession to the EU.<sup>62</sup>

### The European Union

Athens has managed, despite Turkey's custom union with the EU, to block the passage of EU aid money to Ankara. Only in 1999, in the wake of the talks between the two countries – more of which later – and Turkey's devastating earthquakes, did Athens deign to release the funds, which by then had reached the not inconsiderable sum of 500 million dollars. But, this was as far as cooperation between the two the sides went. Ankara, though grateful, still threatened to veto the admission of new NATO members should the Republic of Cyprus join the EU, while Athens warned that in the event of talks between the EU and TRNC it would blackball any future EU members. Athens justified its recalcitrant stance but arguing that it was acting for the benefit of its fellow EU states. After all, it explained, "we are simply telling the Turks, what you feel about them."<sup>63</sup> Whatever the truth of the matter, Athens regarded its ability to block Turkey's accession to the EU as a major strategic asset.

While some European states perhaps secretly welcomed Greece's obduracy, others deplored it. Greece's insistence upon blocking Turkish membership, they remonstrated, dangerously polarized attitudes in Turkey. In January 1997, Klaus Kinkel, the German Foreign Minister publicly blamed Greece – its refusal to transfer EU money to Turkey – "for Turkey's Islamisation" which, he claimed, "largely due to Turkey's estrangement . . . is the fault of the Greek element in the EU."<sup>64</sup> The point behind Kinkel's and other similar strictures was that Turkish radicalism will be cut short the moment Europe – for which read Greece – stops alienating Turkey. These criticisms were hardly music to Greece's ear, and served to increase its own sense of alienation.

The events in the Balkan did not help. There, for reasons of Orthodox solidarity, Greece, in stark opposition to the rest of NATO, declined to take action against the Serbs and side with the Bosnian Muslims. It justified its refusal to “act like civilised Scandinavians in the Balkans,” by pointing out that it knows better than any one else the “pleasure” of living next to Muslims. Nevertheless the whole episode left it feeling isolated, its self-image “a lone wolf” more deeply entrenched than ever.<sup>65</sup>

Then at the end of 1990s, for reasons soon to be discussed, Greece reached the conclusion that if it wanted to modify Turkish policies it should start speaking with Ankara and that, therefore, a few concessions were in order. Its decision to sanction the Helsinki resolution, and allow Turkey to become a candidate for EU membership, marked a revolution in Greek policies. Greece’s agreement to Turkey’s candidature was not, however, condition free. Athens insisted that a solution to the Cyprus problem should no longer be considered a prerequisite to the Republic of Cyprus’s accession to the EU. It was adamant that, henceforth, all Greek–Turkish territorial disputes be referred to the International Court of Justice at The Hague. Finally, it demanded that Turkey meet the same accession conditions as the other eleven EU candidates. In this context, Greece pointed to the need for a serious discussion of the human rights situation in Turkey, noting that, in order to qualify for EU membership, it, Turkey, will have to modify over 20,000 Turkish laws and regulations in line with the EU’s human rights statutes.<sup>66</sup>

### Minorities and ethnic problems

The minorities in the Greek provinces of Xanthi and Rodopi and in Western Thrace are another source of friction. Athens, i.e. the official Greek publication *The Muslim Minority of Thrace: Minority Rights in a European State*, considers them Muslim.<sup>67</sup> Ankara insists that they are Turks and claims that they are subject to unfair restrictions, even persecution by the Greek authorities. A pamphlet published in 1998 by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe entitled: *The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace* accuses Greece of cultural and ethnic cleansing, just short of genocide. The pamphlet has both infuriated and alarmed Greece, which, seeing that the Federation’s sole point of contact is a telephone number in Ankara and that it was distributed by the Turkish Foreign Ministry and various Turkish embassies, suspects that it is Turkey’s handiwork. A second publication, *The Macedonian Minority in Greece: A Human Tragedy within the Boundaries of the European Union*, proved even more worrying. This pamphlet, issued by the Turkish Foreign Ministry not only accused Greece of atrocities against Greek Macedonians, but included maps identifying several regions within Greece as Macedonian.<sup>68</sup> Greece is nervous that, as in Cyprus, these allegations of ill treatment will be followed by active Turkish intervention on behalf of the Muslim minority and the creation of a new northern Cyprus in Greece itself.

In like manner, Athens also links Turkey's close ties with the Muslim minorities along the Greek borders in FRYOM, Albania and Bulgaria, with events in Cyprus, pointing out that in all these cases Turkey insists that it is simply protecting the region's Turkish Muslim minority. With the Cypriot precedent constantly looming in the background, Athens frets that Turkey is not only bent upon helping the Muslim minorities challenge Greece's territorial integrity but might even intervene on their behalf. It is one reason why Athens views the Turkish land and naval units stationed permanently in Tirana and Albanian ports with suspicion and concern.

Greece has tried to meet the ethnic challenge with, among other things, demographic weapons. The Greece Orthodox Church announced "A Greek Plan to Spur Births", designed to increase the birth rate among Greek Orthodox families along the Turkish border. According to the plan, applied initially in northwestern Thrace, each Greek Orthodox family will receive a substantial subsidy for every third child born.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, Greece has its own ethnic-based complaints against Turkey. *The Greeks of Turkey: Under Threat of Elimination* shrieks the title of one Greek publication. Athens also accuses Turkey of deliberately repressing Istanbul's Greek Orthodox community, a community, it notes, which in 1923 numbered 100,000 and in 1988 a mere 5,000. Athens has likewise made much of Turkey's now defunct Refah Partisi's – the Muslim Welfare Party – call to convert the Aghia Sophia into a mosque. And, while delighted with the US Congress's decision to appoint a commission of inquiry to examine the human rights situation in Turkey, Athens was outraged that the same commission was also charged with investigating the status of Thrace's minorities.<sup>70</sup>

Several other ethnic battles have infringed upon and played a part in the Greek–Turkish conflict. Greece, for instance, declared 24 April a Memorial Day, marking the deaths of the Armenians massacred, or so Greece claims, by the Turks during the First World War. Turkey's war with the PKK is another, more serious, example. Indeed, Athens viewed its links with the PKK as one of its few effective weapons against Turkey, assuming that the more resources Ankara wasted on the PKK, the less it could afford to open a second front against Greece. The last thing Athens wanted was a PKK-free Turkey at liberty to turn its attention to Greece. Similarly a Turkey flanked by a strong Iraq, Iran and Syria meant a harassed Turkey, which poses less of a threat to Greece. Hence Athens's strong protests to Israel following the Israeli–Turkish rapprochement. Greece accepted the Israeli argument that Turkey could have easily found an alternative to the supply of Israeli weapons. But Israel's cooperation with Turkey, Athens complained, by effectively neutralizing Syria, meant that Ankara was free to take action against Greece.

In view of all this, it is hardly surprising that when on 20 October 1998 Syria and Turkey signed an anti-terror agreement, alarm bells reverberated throughout Athens. The Adana Memorandum was preceded by a series of tough Turkish demands, accompanied by ominous declarations, such as Ismet Sezgin's, Turkey's Defence Minister, murmurings that "Turkey's patience is running out."

There were also implicit threats of intervention, as when Turkey deployed hundreds of armored vehicles and several thousand troops along its 375 mile long border with Syria. In addition, the head of Turkish Intelligence was rumored to have warned his Syrian counterpart that “Turkey’s military would enter Syria from one side, leave it from the other” – another version spoke of Turkish tanks rolling into Damascus within ten hours of crossing the border – unless the latter expelled Ocalan. All in all it proved a pretty successful mode of negotiation. Syria, for example, agreed to end its anti-Turkish campaign sparked off by Ankara’s close contacts with Jerusalem, thus underlining the potency of the Turkish military threats. The Syrian–Turkish accord itself – partially brokered by Iran and Egypt – banned all PKK activity, including trade and commerce, in Syria.<sup>71</sup> Syria further agreed to stop supporting the PKK and expel Ocalan. Finally, it undertook to persuade Lebanon to do the same.<sup>72</sup> Thrown out of Syria, Ocalan was soon caught in Nairobi.

Proof of Turkey’s military power and its ability to impose its will, without having to fire a single shot, the Syrian–Turkish accord reawoke all Athens’s old fears of its neighbor to the east, plus some new ones. Turkey was clearly on a roll. It began with its humiliating indifference to the Greek deterrence, followed by its threat to bomb the S-300, which, in turn, forced Cyprus and Greece to back down and station the missiles in Crete. Now came Turkey’s diktat to Syria to end its association with the PKK. The Adana Memorandum not only demonstrated, conclusively, Turkey’s regional military dominance, but it gave it a decisive edge in its battle against the PKK at home and in northern Iraq. Moreover Turkey was now sufficiently confident to tackle the PKK’s other patrons. Having pushed Ocalan out of Syria, it made sure that none of the European countries would grant him asylum. Turkey eventually caught up with Ocalan in Kenya, where he found refuge in the Greece embassy. His capture, again without Turkey firing a single shot, marked the beginning of the end of the war against the PKK.

Thus, two key players – Syria and the PKK – who had enjoyed intermittent Greek support and who by consuming a considerable portion of Turkey’s time and resources, had diverting its attention away from Greece, had practically disappeared. Was it, Greece wondered, now its turn? Would it too be subjected to a Turkish diktat similar to the one addressed to Syria? The climate in Ankara did not appear promising. Ocalan’s arrest, the Turkish media predicted menacingly, “is only the beginning . . . Turkey has proved itself a feared enemy . . . its adversaries have learned the hard way that no one can undermine the vital interests of our country.”<sup>73</sup> The fact that Turkey’s Prime Minister at the time was Bulent Ecevit, the man not only responsible for Turkey’s successes against the PKK, but who ordered Turkey’s intervention in Cyprus in 1974, and certainly appeared in no mood for compromise, did not calm Greek nerves.

These developments, plus the assessment of Greece’s and Turkey’s relative military strengths, fuelled Athens’ fears for the future, making the possibility of talks with Turkey suddenly an extremely attractive proposition. It was certainly, Athens thought, preferable to an armed conflict with a powerful

and overconfident Turkey. Interestingly enough, Turkey too, for all its belligerent posturing, had no interest in an open military conflict with Greece, which would have a devastating effect on its relations with Europe. Moreover, Turkey was well aware that it would be negotiating from a position of strength. All this goes a long way toward explaining the current rapprochement between Greece and Turkey

### A breakthrough?

In July 1999, after almost ten years of virtually no direct contact, Greece and Turkey embarked on a new round of talks. Given that the 1988 Davos accord resulted in nothing but disputes over interpretation, allegations of cheating, and shattered hopes, neither side was overly confident about the outcome of the current discussions.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, seeking to lower expectations, they admitted they would be extremely surprised if the talks produced any substantive or dramatic results. "We are not," George Papandreou, Greece's new Foreign Minister explained modestly, "aiming very high, merely to the point where we think we might achieve some results." His Turkish counterpart, Ismail Cem agreed, speaking of the effort to draw closer, "without raising expectations or being too assertive."<sup>75</sup> Both believed that small steps forward in non-contentious areas such as environmental and cultural affairs, crime fighting, economic cooperation, even the removal of Greece's ban on EU aid payments to Turkey, were all that was possible at the time. However, once achieved, these will act as a springboard for further more complex negotiations over such intractable problems as Cyprus, the Aegean border, and Turkey's EU membership, which clearly demand a more favorable climate.<sup>76</sup>

Previous attempts at a Greek–Turkish rapprochement have proceeded at particularly leisurely pace. It took Greece and Turkey ten years to finally agree to implement the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) – including a commitment to respect each others' sovereignty – drawn up in May and September 1989, following Andreas Papandreou and Ozal's meeting in Davos. The CBMs established guidelines reducing to a minimum the interruptions to civilian shipping and air traffic caused by military exercises on the high seas and in international air space. They also specified a code designed to prevent incidents and accidents on the high seas and in international air space, involving the two countries' air and naval forces. The Greek periodical *COSMOS*, for one, did not think that the ten-year time lapse between Davos and the CBMs' implementation augured well for the future.<sup>77</sup>

Yet these caveats, doubts, and reservations apart, the remarkable chemistry between Papandreou and Cem, who regularly refer to each other as "Dear George" and "Dear Ismail" did raise expectations similar to those evoked by the Davos accords.<sup>78</sup> Some even harked back to the 1930s and the surprising friendship that sprung up between those two seemingly die hard enemies Eleftherois

Venizelos and Mustafa Kemal, which led to the conclusion of several extremely satisfactory agreements between Greece and Turkey.<sup>79</sup>

### **The reasons behind the thaw**

Several factors combine to explain the, on the face of it, surprising turn for the better in Greek–Turkish relations. The two violent earthquakes, which hit Turkey and Greece in August and September of 1999, resulted in a fierce outpouring of shared grief and sympathy.<sup>80</sup> The mutual devastation and empathy were such that both, almost reflexively, sent humanitarian aid to help ease their neighbor's plight. The Ocalan affair, which could have led to an alarming deterioration in Greek–Turkish relations, was another factor serving as springboard for a renewed dialogue instead. It is worth mentioning in this context the Kurdish anti-Greek demonstrations throughout Europe, the seizure by Kurds of Greek legations in Europe and Kurdish accusations of Greek connivance in Ocalan's capture – despite the fact that it was Greece who gave him refuge in the first place – which led to bitter Greek recriminations concerning Kurdish perfidy and ingratitude. This made it easier for Greece to disassociate itself from the Kurdish cause, thus removing another source of conflict with Turkey. Events in the neighboring Balkans and above all the Kosovo crisis, provided a salutary shock to both countries as they found themselves not only on either side of the Balkan divide ethnically, religiously, politically, and even militarily, but also in danger of being sucked into the conflict. Not wishing to follow in the destructive path of the feuding Balkan states, Greece and Turkey decided that dialogue, even cooperation, is infinitely preferable to inflammatory unilateral steps or just plain estrangement.

Non-governmental groups and societies have also played their part in promoting Greek–Turkish relations, as has tourism, though not to begin with. In 1984, following the record number of Greeks who visited Turkey – several hundred thousand in 1982–83 – Ankara decided to exempt Greek tourists of the need to acquire visas. Unfortunately, as the most popular tourist sites proved to be the areas from which the Greeks were expelled during the 1920s, Greek tourism, at this point, did nothing but fan the flames of ethnic hatred. The number of tourists from both countries dropped dramatically, so that by 1985 only 130,000 Greeks visited Turkey and 200,000 Turks visited Greece. Things have improved since the thaw in Greek–Turkish relations, and especially since the 1999 earthquakes, with Turkey welcoming over 170,000 Greek tourists and 500,000 Turks spending their holidays in Greece.<sup>81</sup>

But, as John Sitalides correctly observed, much of the credit for the new positive climate should go to the private business sector. Early 2000 saw an unprecedented number of private initiatives in a number of diverse economic fields. These initiatives, engineered by entrepreneurs of various nations, range over a several countries and continents. Thus, Italian, Greek, and Turkish companies joined forces to build, within three years, a half-billion dollar energy plant

which, using gas from Russia and run by the Exxon-Mobile Corporation, will provide Turkey with much needed power. Other examples include a Greek firm who purchased a Turkish mine, in order to export its raw materials to Europe and Africa for industrial, agricultural, and construction purposes. A natural gas network system is also planned, which, linking Greece to Turkey, and allowing the latter to purchase surplus Greek gas, will meet Turkey's huge energy demands. There is also a joint Greek-Turkish venture, funded by the EU, to construct high-voltage transmission lines which will deliver electricity to the Balkans. A Greek plant, which uses Turkish technology to manufacture plastic irrigation pipes for the Balkan market, is another joint Greek-Turkish initiative. Finally, there are plans to install environmentally sensitive wind-power production systems in Greece and Turkey, thus relieving, to a degree, their grave urban pollution problems.<sup>82</sup>

That same year, Turkey held an exhibition in Athens promoting Turkish exports, including textiles, chemical products, medical instruments, and consumer goods. It proved a huge success as dozens of Greek companies rushed to buy Turkish goods, especially textiles and ready-made clothes. Not surprisingly there are now plans for an Athens-based Greek-Turkish Chamber of Commerce. At the end of February 2000, 140 Greek businesspeople met in Istanbul with their Turkish counterparts to discuss ways of overcoming obstacles to trade such as tariffs and dual taxation, and of boosting export subsidies. They also explored the possibilities of new joint business ventures mostly in the Black Sea region.<sup>83</sup>

Trade clearly played an important part in promoting the Greek-Turkish rapprochement. In 1995, trade between the two countries – with a combined population of over 75 million people – was a mere 411 million dollars. By 1998, it was 690 million.<sup>84</sup> Then came 2000 a year with a profusion of private economic initiatives. It is evident that as trade and economic cooperation increase, as more people, companies and countries are involved in joint ventures, and as the profits from these initiatives mount and, with them, the reluctance to lose all that has been invested and gained, so will the number of parties who have a vested interest in good relations grow. As a result, politicians and soldiers will find it increasingly difficult to check, let alone reverse, the current thaw in Greek-Turkish relations. Indeed, as far back as 1996 a meeting of Greek and Turkish business entrepreneurs concluded that once the annual trade between the two countries reached the 2 billion dollar mark, soldiers and politicians would be much less eager to orchestrate crises.<sup>85</sup>

As for the politicians, in Greece, Pangalos's dismissal and replacement by more a moderate politician clearly helped the cause of reconciliation. So did the obvious chemistry between George Papandreou and Ismail Cem, Greece and Turkey's current Foreign Ministers, who, incidentally, are both trained sociologists. At the same time, and paradoxically, the fact that Turkey's Prime Minister is Bulent Ecevit, the man who ordered Turkey's invasion of Cyprus and orchestrated Ocalan's capture, augurs well for any future negotiations. Given his past history, Ecevit can afford to make concessions without fear of being accused of

being weak or unpatriotic. His image as a strong man will certainly come in useful in dealing with Turkey's nationalists and the TRNC's inevitable complaints once a painful compromise over Cyprus is hammered out. The Greek Prime Minister, Costas Simitis, has already had to overcome charges of lack of patriotism, when he rejected the "so called super patriots" demand to "Kurdify Greek foreign policy."<sup>86</sup> The chances of Ecevit being subjected to a similar brow-beating are very small indeed.

### First steps

The path ahead of Greece and Turkey is both long and thorny. There is little hope, for example, of a compromise over the Aegean. Athens insists that its territorial rights in the Aegean are not open to negotiation and that any dispute should be turned over to the International Court of Justice. Turkey, however, does not recognize the court's jurisdiction and is adamant that the two resolve their Aegean disagreements between them. The prospects for a meeting of minds over Cyprus are not much better. This despite Ankara's acute sensitivity to the fact if it fails to meet mounting international expectations it will be the one branded bull-headed and intractable.<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless these knotty issues apart, between 1999 and 2000, Greek–Turkish relations underwent a radical transformation. September 1999 saw talks between Greece and Turkey on a whole range of issues, including cultural and economic affairs, energy production, anti-seismic safety measures, and security matters. The mayors of Athens and Istanbul visited each other and signed a protocol on cultural, trade, tourism, and technical cooperation. In addition, both sides announced measures that augured well for the future. Sabahattin Cakmakoglou, the Turkish Defence Minister, promised, in light of the recent improvement in Greek–Turkish relations, to reduce the number of Turkish military exercises in the Aegean, while admitting that some of them may have been "carried out for political reasons connected to our neighbours." He added that, "Repeated exercises constitute an additional cost for the economy."<sup>88</sup> The Turkish air force agreed not only to accept the Athenian FIR, but to remove all ammunition from planes flying over the Aegean. Meanwhile, in Greece, DIMITIS Apostolakis, Greece's Deputy National Defense Minister's conceded that Athens did not consider Israeli–Turkish military cooperation a threat, an admission as surprising as it was refreshing. His hope that no one in Greece will even think of the two countries' association as an anti-Greek axis is far removed from Pangalos's offensive depiction of Israel and Turkey as "evil states."<sup>89</sup>

That same month a Turkish football team, the Marmara Sports Club, played a charity match in Rhodes, to raise money for the Turkish and Greek earthquake victims. Among the fans accompanying the club was the former Turkish President, General Kenan Evren. The Greek press, harking back to previous Greek–Turkish sporting events, which resembled battlefields rather than sports



meetings, noted how “not too long ago the arrival on a Greek island of a senior Turkish General, retired or not, dozens of Turkish reporters and a group of young Turks would have inflamed many sections of [Greek] society.” This was clearly no longer the case. The Turkish journalist, Yorgo Kirbaki, was also struck by the changed atmosphere. In the past, he wrote, matches between Greece and Turkey in the PAOK Thessaloniki stadium were “hell on earth, it being almost impossible to leave the stadium in one piece.” But, he enthused, the September 1999 match between PAOK and Galatasaray, “was heaven . . . I remember neither the match nor the goals. But who cares? Turks and Greeks under the same sky hugged one another and prayed for a peaceful tomorrow, filled with friendship and love!”<sup>90</sup>

In November 1999, there began a new round of UN-brokered proximity talks over Cyprus, while President Clinton visited both Greece and Turkey. December saw a major breakthrough in the countries’ relations, with Greece finally lifting its veto on Turkey’s candidacy for the EU. Meanwhile, Turkey, having first removed the Heybeliada Clerical School in Istanbul, closed since 1971, from the control of the Fener Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and placed it under the its own authority, and then setting up a body – The High Religious Council Administration, part of Istanbul’s University’s School of Theology – to monitor the Orthodox education provided by the school, promised to reopen the school, thus removing one more bone of Greek–Turkish contention.<sup>91</sup> Finally, the Greek football federation decided, in December 1999, to put in, together with its Turkish counterpart, a bid to host Euro 2008.

Throughout these months a record number of Greek companies have contacted the Turkish embassy in Athens in search of Turkish partners with which to do business in Turkey. Athens hinted that it might recognize the existence of a Turkish minority in Western Thrace, going so far as to admit that they are not “Muslimized Greeks” and that “there is no need to repeat the sins of past.” In return, Greece expected comparable improvements in the position of Istanbul’s Greek citizens.<sup>92</sup> Representatives of Greek and Turkish municipalities in the Aegean met to discuss common problems. A modern Turkish history exhibition was sent to Thessaloniki and Athens aboard Mustapha Kemal’s personal railway car. A Turkish Friendship Train carrying rail workers, journalists and emergency personnel, and whose purpose was to bolster the new and positive discourse between the two countries’ media, arrived in Thessaloniki just as the Turkish Consulate there was marking the sixty-first anniversary of Kemal Ataturk’s death.<sup>93</sup>

In January 2000, the Greek Foreign Secretary paid an official visit, the first since 1962, to Ankara. Greece and Turkey also concluded a series of bilateral agreements on illegal immigration, combating terrorism, cross-border crime, fraud and organized crime, money laundering, duplicate taxation, shipping, science and technological co-operation, and environmental protection. Not surprisingly, John Sitalides thought this to be “the most intense period of diplomatic engagement between Greece, Cyprus, Turkey and the United States, in years.”<sup>94</sup>

There has also been remarkable progress on the military front. In the early summer of 1999, Turkish military planes carrying humanitarian aid to Kosovo were allowed to fly over Greece. A short time later, a 1,400-strong Greek force took part in peacemaking operations in Kosovo alongside Turkish troops. Overall, since 1994 about 2,020 Greek and 2,360 Turkish troops have served together in UN and NATO missions, first in Bosnia and then in 1999 in Kosovo.<sup>95</sup> October 1999 saw the official opening of NATO's Joint Southern Command Center, in Larissa, Greece, born of the Alliance's recent reorganization. It is one of four subregional NATO headquarters, the remaining three are situated in Izmir in Turkey, Verona in Italy, and Madrid in Spain. Greeks and Turks work closely together in both Larissa and Izmir. A Turkish Major General is the Larissa's Center's Chief of Staff, while a Greek Major General holds the same position in Izmir. The newly formed South East European Brigade (SEEBRIG) is a joint Greek, Italian, and Turkish venture. This seven-nation regional task force is currently commanded by a Turkish Brigadier General, while a top Greek Defense Ministry official oversees its policies. The brigade's headquarters, at present in Bulgaria, will move to each of its member states in turn.<sup>96</sup>

In early June 2000, 150 Turkish marines, provided with air cover by ten Turkish jet fighters, landed on Greek shores as part of a NATO training exercise. Athens also agreed to let Turkish warplanes to fly over Greece while en route elsewhere. And, it announced its intention to vacate the Andros and Psathoura shooting ranges located in the middle of Aegean's international air space. In the meantime, back in Turkey, a bold plan was drawn up for the dissolution of the 100,000-strong Turkish Aegean Army, established in 1975 in response to the rising tension with Greece and stationed only a stone's throw away from the Greek forces in the Greek Aegean islands. In return, Turkey expected Greece to make several concessions over the Aegean. The plan, which many in Turkey thought premature, was eventually shelved. Nevertheless, the mere fact that senior Turkish officials, such as Admiral Guven Erkaya, Prime Minister Ecevit's personal advisor, cast doubt on the future of the hitherto sacrosanct Aegean Army is clear evidence of the fresh winds blowing in Turkey.<sup>97</sup>

## The future

It remains to be seen whether the thaw in Greek–Turkish relations will have long-term and lasting results. There remain, despite the friendly even accommodating atmosphere, several serious differences between the two countries, particularly over questions of sovereignty and flying rights in the Aegean. There Greece and Turkey still intercept each other's aircraft, on the dubious grounds that they have violated the Turkish or Greek Aegean islands' air space, as happened during a NATO exercise in October 2000 over the islands of Lemnos and Ikariya.

On the whole, however, Greece and Turkey seem anxious to confine their disputes to the rhetorical level, though when compared to the aggressive and

nasty war of words which had hitherto characterized the two countries' relations, their recent declarations have been remarkably temperate, even tame. Even more striking are the pacific and conciliatory statements issuing from both sides of the Aegean. Bulent Ecevit has admitted that Turkey has no territorial designs on Greece, adding that there are no real conflicts of interest between Ankara and Athens. This sentiment was echoed by the Greek Prime Minister, Simitis, who claimed that the delineation of the Aegean continental shelf is Athens's sole remaining dispute with Turkey, the implication being that all the other stumbling blocks to better relations, including apparently Cyprus, have been removed. These seem to be slightly extravagant claims, and the Greek government's spokesman was probably closer to the mark when he described the current state of relations between Greece and Turkey as one of "non tension."<sup>98</sup>

The fate of Turkey's bid for EU membership, will have a decisive effect on future Greek-Turkish relations. George Papandreou, underlined this point when he urged not to let "the momentum that has developed [following Turkey's candidacy] go to waste." It was, he emphasized, "of vital importance . . . that Turkey's candidacy did not remain on paper . . . Greece had endorsed an authentic candidacy, which anticipated the actual rather than sham prospect of Turkey joining the EU." Once Turkey realizes that its accession to the EU is assured, it might well become more flexible as regards other outstanding Greek-Turkish quarrels. Better still, welcomed by Europe, Turkey's acute sense of isolation, alienation, even siege will wither away, and this, in turn, may help resolve the questions, such as the Kurdish issue, dividing Turkey and the EU.<sup>99</sup>

Conversely, once Turkey joins the EU Athens will begin to regard its neighbor to the east as a European rather than exclusively Greek problem. Incidentally, the Kurdish demonstrations throughout Europe, following Ocalan's arrest, made it clear that Turkey is indeed a European issue. As a result, Greece will expect various European bodies to deal with Turkey. No longer compelled to act as Europe's anti-Turkish spokesman or spearhead the EU's anti-Turkish policies, Greece will be relieved of its self-imposed burden of confronting Turkey for Europe's sake. This, in turn, will lead to marked improvement in Greece's relations with Turkey and, no less importantly, Europe. No longer in Europe's "bad book," Greece's conviction that it is "a lone wolf," might disappear to be replaced by the gratifying sense it is looked upon kindly by its fellow EU members.

How else will a lasting thaw or, better still, a future settlement benefit Turkey and Greece? For one thing, it will mark the end of 500 years of Hellenic-Turkish enmity, at least on paper. It will allow Greece to settle its territorial disputes with Turkey. A prospective territorial settlement will, in all likelihood, designate those areas that may be reasonably considered Hellenic sovereign Greek territory. In return, however, Greece will have to give up its *Megali Idea* ambitions and Greek irredentism will come to an end. It will be worth it as, for the first time in history, instead of being threatened by Turkey, Greece's borders will enjoy Turkey's blessing. Moreover, no longer the sole member of the EU embroiled in an international ethnic, political, and military conflict, Greece's

process of integration into Europe will move swiftly ahead. It would, for example, be given the aid it needs to meet EMU economic and financial standards. As a result instead of being, as it currently is, the least economically inspiring member of the EU, Greece's financial and economic situation may take a turn for the better.

Turkey will benefit equally. The sweeping Greek–Turkish ethnic and international conflict will no longer bar – at least on paper – Turkey's way westwards toward acceptance as a European country. Greece may even be willing to give Turkey a hand in attaining this far from easy goal. Thus, at long last, the century-long Kemalist quest to become a part of Europe will be attained, with all the credit going to the Turkish Kemalist government. This will no doubt strengthen the government's hand, as will the fact that internally Islamic and radical nationalism, which fed on Greek and European animosity, will fade away. A friendly Greece may also help clear the way towards an improvement in Turkey's relations with the Orthodox world, including, and above all, Russia. The two might even cooperate to stabilize the ever turbulent Balkans. Above all, once its conflict with Greece is over, Turkey will be able to celebrate the truly remarkable achievement of not having been directly involved in a major war for almost a century. It is a record not many countries, especially in the Middle East and east Mediterranean, can match. True there was Korea and Cyprus. But the former was Turkey's meal ticket into NATO and took place thousands of miles from home, while the latter was a military picnic. In sum, never will Atatürk's promise of "peace at home and peace abroad," be closer to fulfillment.

## Notes

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- 9 *The Economist*, 27 July 1991.
- 10 George Papandreou, Greece's Foreign Minister since 1999, was at the time Minister of Education. George Papandreou, "Greece, the United States and their Mutual Common Interests in the Balkans," in Theodore A. Couloumbis, Thanos M. Veremis, and Thanos Dokos (eds), *The Southeast European Year Book 1993*, Athens, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), 1994, p. 19; Ekavi Athanassopoulou, "Ankara's Foreign Policy Objectives After the End of the Cold War," *Orient*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 1995, p. 273.
- 11 *DNB*, 28 September 1996. For details on the Imia/Kardak incident see Andre Gerolymatos, "The Military Balance of Power Between Greece and Turkey: Tactical and Strategic Objectives," in Aldo Chircop, Andre Gerolymatos, and John O. Iatrides, (eds), *The Aegean Sea after the Cold War: Security and Law of the Sea Issues*, London, Macmillan, 2000, pp. 48–49; Athanassios G. Platias, "Greek Deterrence Strategy," in Aldo Chircop, Andre Gerolymatos, and John O. Iatrides (eds), *The Aegean Sea after the Cold War: Security and Law of the Sea Issues*, London, Macmillan, 2000, p. 66.
- 12 Platias, "Greece's Strategic Doctrine," pp. 97–98.
- 13 *Ibid.*; Platias, "Greek Deterrence Strategy," pp. 69–70. Turkey's and Greece's GDP for 1997 were 207.5 billion dollars and 124 billion dollars, respectively. Their GDP growth rates were 4.1 percent and 3.2 percent respectively. See *The Economist*, reprinted in *Ha'aretz*, 21 December 1998.
- 14 Platias, "Greece's Strategic Doctrine," pp. 100–101, 103; Platias, "Greek Deterrence Strategy," p. 73.
- 15 *DNB*, 27 September 1997.
- 16 Volkan and Itzkowitz, *Turks and Greeks*, pp. 169, 179, 181–182.
- 17 *DNB*, 8 March 1996.
- 18 *Turkish Daily News (TDN)*, 19 February 1999. Also dismissed, following their part in the Ocalan affair, were the Greek Interior Minister, Alekos Papadoploulos, and the Minister for Public Order, Philipos Petsalnikos. On Pangalos's outburst in July 1998, during which he pilloried President Clinton, calling him "a liar," see also *Kathimerini* (Greek), 31 December 1998. *TDN*, 2 February 1999, reported that on 6 January 1999 the Turkish Justice Ministry announced that women and young girls would no longer have to undergo virginity tests.
- 19 *DNB*, 15 May 1996.
- 20 *DNB*, 19 August and 18 December 1996, *DNB*, 27 September 1997.
- 21 Birsan Iskenderoglu, "Turkey vs. the West," *TDN*, 20 February 1999; Interview with Ambassador Nezeretis, *TDN*, February 16, 1999 (emphases in the original).
- 22 *Milliyet*, 17 December 1997; *Turkistan Newsletter*, Vol. 98-2:081, 28 April 1998; *TDN*, 23 February 1999. For the Lavrion camp see *Time*, 30 March 1998; *DNB*, 22 March 1997.
- 23 *Ta Nea* (Greek), 20 August 1999; *Hurriyet* (Turkish), 21 August 1999; *Sabah* (Turkish), 20 August 1999; Gundogdu, "Identities in Question," p. 8.
- 24 Victor S. Papacosma, "More than Rocks: The Aegean's Discordant Legacy," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 4, Autumn 1996, pp. 86–87.
- 25 *TDN*, 2 February 1999.
- 26 See also Van Coufoudakis, Presentation; Papacosma, "More than Rocks," p. 83; Platias, "Greece's Strategic Doctrine," p. 93.
- 27 Papacosma, "More than Rocks," pp. 87–88; Thanos Veremis, "The Ongoing Aegean Crisis," *Thesis*, Vol. 1, No. 11, Spring 1997, pp. 22–32; Gerolymatos, "The Military Balance of Power Between Greece and Turkey," pp. 53–54.
- 28 Gerolymatos, "The Military Balance of Power Between Greece and Turkey," p. 55.
- 29 Institute of International Relations, Panteion University, Athens, *COSMOS*, Vol. 2, No. 8, July–August 1998, p. 2.
- 30 *Ibid.*

- 31 Gerolymatos, “Military Balance of Power Between Turkey and Greece,” p. 55; *DNB*, 14 November 1996; Platias, “Greek Deterrence Strategy,” p. 180.
- 32 *TDN*, 7 April 1997; *TDN*, 10 May 1999.
- 33 *TDN*, 9 March 1999.
- 34 *TDN*, 19 and 23 February 1999; *TDN*, 2 March 1999; *Turkish Probe*, 21 February and 7 March 1999.
- 35 On the cost of Turkey–PKK war see *Milliyet*, 23 January 1998; *Christian Science Monitor*, 22 April 1998; *TDN*, 18 February and 30 June 1999; Tamar Gabelnick, William D. Hartung, and Jennifer Washburn, *Arming Repression: U.S. Arms Sales to Turkey during the Clinton Administration*, a joint report of the World Policy Institute and the Federation of American Scientists, October 1999, available at [www.fas.org/asmp/library/reports/turkeyrep.htm](http://www.fas.org/asmp/library/reports/turkeyrep.htm).
- 36 *Hurriyet*, 18 August 1999; *TDN*, 21 March 2000; *TDN*, 14 and 28 April 2000. In April 2000, the Turkish military and Foreign Ministry considered possible cuts in the Turkish arms procurement program. Officially the reason was the economic devastation caused by the August 1999 earthquake. In addition, Confidence Building Measures, including military cutbacks, implemented by Turkey’s neighbors were regarded as an incentive for similar steps on Turkey’s part. At the same time, however, the Turkish Defence Minister, Sabahattin Cakmakoglu, announced an *increase* in the country’s weapons procurement, to the tune of 145 helicopter gunships, 1,000 main battle tanks, and 8, instead of 4, airborne early warning aircraft. Cakmakoglu warned that Turkey’s much improved relations with Syria and Greece should not delude the Turks into thinking that the planned armament programme was no longer necessary. He then added, perhaps to silence potential critics, that while Turkey’s military budget is 8.8 per cent of its national budget, that of other NATO members is 10–20 per cent.
- 37 Thassos Giannitsis, “Greece and the European Economic and Monetary Union,” *Thesis*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1997, pp. 13–21; *Ha’aretz*, 16 January 2000. One of the conditions Greece had to meet before it joined the EMU was to stabilize the drachma’s rate of exchange against the euro, with 15 percent being the most it may fluctuate. Greece’s poor growth record in the 1980s and 1990s should be set against its impressive performance between 1960 and 1972 when, at 6.2 percent, its average annual growth rates were the highest in Europe and North America. See also *COSMOS*, Vol. 2, No. 6, March–April 1998, p. 1.
- 38 Lawrence Korb, presentation, The American Hellenic Chamber of Commerce and the Brookings Institute, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, conference on “USA–Greece–Turkey in the Emerging International System,” Athens, 17–19 June 1993.
- 39 On the history of the 7:10 ratio see Ellen Laipson, “Greece and Turkey: The Seven-Ten Ratio in Military Aid,” Congressional Research Service (CRS), The Library of Congress, CRS Report for Congress 90-29 F, revised 26 December 1989.
- 40 Gabelnick, Hartung, and Washburn, *Arming Repression*.
- 41 *TDN*, 17 March 1999.
- 42 On the Jewish lobbies’ assistance see Yasemin Dorba-Manco, “Jewish-American Organisations Lobby for Silk Road Initiative,” interview with Daniel Mariaschin, Director, B’nai B’rith International Centre for Public Policy, *TDN*, 28 July 1999; Barry Jacobs, “The Role of the American Jewish Community in Fostering Relations and as a Friend of Turkey,” lecture, Istanbul, Marmara Hotel, 10 June 1999. For Ambassador Kandemir’s see *TDN*, 26 March 1998.
- 43 According to the Cypriot Republic Department of Statistics and Research at the end of 1997, Cyprus’s total population was 746,000, compared with 741,000 the previous year. Of these, 658,000 Cypriots lived in the government-controlled area, and 88,000 in the northern part of the island. The 114,000 Turkish settlers were not included in the department’s estimate. The ethnic breakdown of Cyprus’s population at the end of 1997

- was 84.1 percents Greek-Cypriot, 11.8 percent Turkish-Cypriot, 0.6 percent Maronite, 0.3 percent Armenian, 0.1 percent Latin, and 3.1 percent foreign residents, mostly British and Greek. The same year (1997) saw 9,275 births, compared with 9,638 the previous year, pointing to a decline in the island's fertility rates: 2.00 for 1997, compared with 2.08 the previous year. For demographic data on Cyprus see *Kathimerini*, 26 January 1999. Also Gregory R. Copley, "Turkey, so Close to the Promise of Ataturk, Sees its Promise Options Withering," *Defence and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, Vol. 27, No. 7, July 1999.
- 44 *Avrupa*, quoted in *DNB*, 7 December 1999.
- 45 *DNB*, 28 December 1996.
- 46 *DNB*, 2 December 1996.
- 47 Copley, "Turkey, so Close to the Promise of Ataturk, Sees its Promise Options Withering."
- 48 A. Gerolymatos, lecture, BESA Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, Israel, February 1997; Gerolymatos, "Military Balance of Power," p. 57.
- 49 *TDN*, 19 February 1999.
- 50 Mike Georgiou and Mary Papatzian, "Greece and Turkey: Playing the Power Game – and Loosing," *Athens Watch*, 2 August 1998; *Ha'aretz*, 31 December 1998.
- 51 On the Greek deterrence theory vis-à-vis Turkey see Athanassios Platias, "Greek Deterrence Strategy," in Constantine Arvanitopolous (ed.), *Security Dilemmas in Euroasia*, Athens, Institute of International Relations, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, 1999, pp. 181–183.
- 52 Christopher Brewin, Proceedings of a Panel Discussion, "Why Cyprus Entry into the European Union Would be Illegal," the Turkish Embassy, London, 8 November 2001, p. 13.
- 53 Maurice H. Mendleson, Keynote Speech, the Turkish Embassy, London, 8 November 2001, p. 9.
- 54 For an excellent analysis of the Turkey's Cypriot policies see Ersin Kalaycioglu, "Troubled Waters: Cyprus and Turkish Foreign Policy," Istanbul, Bogazici University, undated, mimeograph; Alan Makovsky, "Turkey and the Bush Administration: The Question Marks," *Policywatch*, No. 527, 30 March 2001.
- 55 *The Economist*, reprinted in *Ha'aretz*, 25 July 2000.
- 56 Kalaycioglu, "Troubled Waters," p. 7.
- 57 Zvi Barel, *Ha'aretz*, 24 January 2000.
- 58 Kalaycioglu, "Troubled Waters," pp. 8, 10.
- 59 Aral, "Turkey's Insecure Identity from the Perspective of Nationalism," pp. 84–85.
- 60 Clement H. Dodd, "Turkey and the Cyprus Question," in Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayari (eds), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC, Washington Institute for Near East Studies, 2000, pp. 153–154, 168.
- 61 *Star*, 10 March 2000.
- 62 Kalaycioglu, "Troubled Waters," p. 13.
- 63 Author's interview with Foreign Ministry officials, Athens, August 1999.
- 64 *DNB*, 9 January 1997.
- 65 Loukas Tsoukalis, "Is Greece an Awkward Partner?," in Kevin Featherstone and Kostas Ifantidis (eds), *Greece in a Changing Europe: Between European Integration and Balkan Disintegration*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1996, p. 28. Athens was considered one of Serbia's staunchest allies. Before the outbreak of the war in Kosovo in March 1999, Greece was one of the biggest investors in Yugoslavia having, over a two-year period, poured some 1 billion dollars into the country. It has also invested around 70 million dollars in Bulgaria, 85 million in Romania and another 70 million in FYROM. *Kathimerini*, 4–5 September 1999.
- 66 *DNB*, 11 December 1999; John Sitalides, Western Policy Centre, Washington, DC, 12 October 1999.

- 67 Hellenic Republic, *European Perspectives, Economic and Foreign Policy Issues*, Athens, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Press and Mass Media, 1997.
- 68 Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Macedonian Minority in Greece: A Human Tragedy within the Boundaries of the European Union*, Ankara, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, May 1999.
- 69 *International Herald Tribune*, 11 March 1999.
- 70 Hellenic Republic, *European Perspectives, Economic and Foreign Policy Issues*.
- 71 *Arabian Trends*, January 2001, p. 20. The PKK controlled much of the drug trade to and from Turkey, the Bqa'a valley, and the "Safe Haven" in northern Iraq. Between 1984 and 1999, while fighting the PKK, the Turkish army seized 13,363 kilos of hashish, 4,255 kilos of morphine, 2,502 kilos of heroin and 621 grams of cocaine. See *TDN*, 12 March 1999.
- 72 *Ha'aretz*, 7 December 1998, reported that since the October 1998 agreement, Syrian newspapers have toned down their criticism of Turkey, which reached new heights following the latter's growing contacts with Israel.
- 73 Ilnur Cevik, editorial, *TDN*, 17 February 1999.
- 74 Andreas Papandreou and Turgut Ozal, the Greek and Turkish Prime Ministers respectively, met in Davos, Switzerland, in January 1988. The meeting paved the way for a series of agreements between the two countries, including a memorandum on confidence-building measures, guidelines for the prevention of incidents on the high seas and in international air space, and a decision to establish two joint committees to discuss closer political and economic relations.
- 75 *TDN*, 4 July 1999.
- 76 *TDN*, 1 July 1999.
- 77 Panteion University, Athens, Institute of International Relations, *COSMOS*, Vol. 2, No. 6 March–April 1998.
- 78 See correspondence between the two, *TDN*, 1 July 1999.
- 79 In 1930, the Greek Prime Minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, "the most important political figure in modern Greece history" (Thanos M. Veremis and Mark Dragoumis, *Historical Dictionary of Greece*, London, Scarecrow Press, 1995, p. 177), signed a treaty of friendship with Turkey, a mere eight years after the Asia Minor debacle. The treaty was to usher in a decade of good relations between Greece and Turkey. See Richard Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 126–127. See also Lord Kinross, *Ataturk: The Rebirth of a Nation*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964, p. 459.
- 80 On EMAK, the Greek rescue team, and on rescue operations in Turkey, see *Kathimerini*, 19 August 1999; *Elefrotipia*, 20 August 1999.
- 81 *DNB*, 27 December 1999.
- 82 All the information on the Greco-Turkish private sector is taken from John Sitalidis, *Regional Integration in Southeastern Europe*, Washington, DC, Western Policy Centre, 2 March 2000.
- 83 *Ibid.*
- 84 Under-Secretariat of Foreign Trade of the Turkish Prime Ministry, *TDN*, 10 July 1999.
- 85 *DNB*, 9 December 1996.
- 86 *TDN*, 2 March 1999.
- 87 *DNB*, 11 December 1999; John Sitalides, Western Policy Center, Washington, DC, 12 October 1999.
- 88 *DNB*, 27 September 1999.
- 89 *Ibid.*
- 90 *DNB*, 25 September 1999; *Radikal*, 2 and 4 September 1999.
- 91 *Hurriyet*, 17 December 1999.
- 92 *Radikal*, 30 July and 2 August 1999.
- 93 Western Policy Center, *The Strategic Regional Report*, Vol. 4, No. 7, 1999.



- 94 John Sitalides, "Much Ado in the Eastern Mediterranean," Western Policy Center, New York, 15 September 1999; Western Policy Center, *The Strategic Regional Report*, Vol. 4, No. 7, 1999.
- 95 On the UN invitation to Turkey to participate in the peacekeeping force in Bosnia, see Ekavi Athanassopoulou, "Ankara's Foreign Policy Objectives after the End of the Cold War," *Orient*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 1995, p. 283.
- 96 Harry Dinella, "Imia, NATO, and Alpha Centauri," Western Policy Center, Washington, DC, Regional Report, Vol. 6, No. 2, March 2001; John Sitalides, "Regional Integration in Southeastern Europe," Western Policy Center, Washington, DC, 2 March 2000.
- 97 *Milliyet*, 22 May 2000.
- 98 *DNB*, 20 September 1999; *DNB*, 14 December 1999.
- 99 *Ibid.*

# 7

## A bridge across the Middle East

### The Turkish–Israeli rapprochement

Two characteristics formerly featuring prominently in Israeli–Turkish relations have vanished from the scene of late. There is now no trace of the “mistress syndrome,” the low profile, to revert to the terms of the complaint voiced by Israel’s first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion.<sup>1</sup> Dr Uri Gordon, the first Israeli Ambassador to Turkey – representation at ambassadorial level, not legation, began in late 1991 – who had started on August 1990 as Chargé d’Affaires in the Israeli Legation in Ankara, and became the first Ambassador on 31 December 1991 wrote:

[I received] a letter from General Halis Burhan, Commander of the Turkish Airforce, inviting the commander of the Israeli Airforce Herzl Bodinger, for an official visit. When the Israeli guest came to pay a call in Ankara on a high member of the Turkish cabinet, he was met there by over twenty representatives of the Turkish press and electronic media. This was no longer “Low Profile.” Other similar visits followed.<sup>2</sup>

Neither was there the zero-sum game policy that obliged Turkey to refrain from fostering relations with Israel, for fear of harming its ties with the Arab and communist worlds. The communist bloc is a thing of the past, as is the power of the Arab world to mobilize its resources for the purpose of dictating policy. Turkey may perhaps suffer over its relations with Israel, but in contrast with the past, this no longer inhibits Ankara in developing its contacts with Jerusalem. Israeli–Turkish relations are out in the open now, Ankara flaunts significant portions of this to the public, undeterred by loud criticism or the counter-measures adopted by the Arab and Islamic worlds.

What are the components of these relationships, widely regarded as one of the main crossroads in the Middle East, often said to include the United States, sometimes Jordan, and described in superlatives kept for rare occasions? (For example: “Israel’s relations with its second friend [with Turkey; the first is

Washington] overshadow even its relations with the United States!") The Turkish–Israeli system is called the “Baghdad Pact No. Two,” the remarkable tie, the “Phantom Pact,” “The Three Musketeers,” brilliant move, rapprochement, alliance, alignment, axis, entente, cooperation, partnership, unique development, shock, betrayal, the contemptuous machination of Turkey’s rich Jews (the *donme*), “the odd couple,” etc. According to one count, by January 2002 sixty-six authors and research institutions had produced more than 100 academic and journalistic publications that attempted to analyze it. Furthermore, as Anat Lewin noticed, the Turkish press adopted the laudatory tone for Israel – its defense technology is the best in the field, the “Mossad” is the most dreaded counter-terrorism intelligence service, Jewish lobbies on the Capitol Hill are the most effective, etc. – meaning that Turkey has much to gain from befriending such a state.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, it is worth noting the comment of Ismail Cem, Turkey’s Foreign Minister, who complained that deliberate exaggeration is used when his country’s relations with Israel are described. Middle Eastern extremist Arabs use excessive terminology, hoping to damage Turkey’s influence in the region; Israelis, who fear an improvement in Turkish–Arab relations, do the same, hoping to spoil Turkey’s status among the Arabs. “Both our Arab and Israeli counterparts have been warned about the matter,” added Cem.<sup>4</sup>

Still, some in Turkey characterize the relations with Israel as the most significant change in their country’s foreign policy in the past fifty years. Israeli parallels are the special relationships Israel pursued with France in the 1950s, Iran in the 1960s and 1970s, and South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. Shimon Peres took a particular pride in the two countries’ rapprochement, defining Turkey as the “locomotive force” of the Muslim world and as “the regional super-power.” Alternatively, Syria deplores the present collaboration between Turkey and Israel that practically “sandwiched” it, and views it as the greatest mishap the Arab world has endured since 1948 (the loss of Palestine). *Al’Quds*, a Palestinian newspaper, showed its readers a cartoon of Mesut Yilmaz, Turkey’s Prime Minister, dressed with the Israeli flag, and, continued the newspaper, when answering the question what kind of songs he loves, Yilmaz replied: the Israeli anthem!<sup>5</sup>

Israeli–Turkish relations can be divided into two periods. The first comprised some forty years of generally covert links, fluctuating in volume, military and intelligence-orientated in nature; during this period, the overt element featured low-level diplomatic representation, with the civilian dimension as minuscule as mutual commerce. By contrast, we can now point to over a decade of ramified connections –military, economic and civilian – whose rapid expansion, since the early 1990s particularly, never fails to astound. On the Israeli side at least, there exists a great eagerness to foster this relationship to the utmost, along with jitters lest anything beyond Israel’s control should bring about its collapse. That is also the undertone behind the words of Alon Liel, an Israeli diplomat who, having served in Turkey during the 1980s, recently called for greater prudence in the special relationship with Turkey, which could be

destroyed by a rash move on Israel's part.<sup>6</sup> Looking for an example, Dr Liel could have easily pointed to the unfortunate words of an Israeli official who had specified what Turkey and Israel have in common: "I don't know if you know, but the Turks really hate Arabs very much."<sup>7</sup> Not much longevity awaits the relationship that is founded on hatred. The words of an earlier Israeli emissary to Turkey, who served there in the 1950s, may therefore be equally applicable to the present period:

[T]he only thing that disturbs me is the optimistic tone . . . The splendid state of Turkish-Israeli relations is liable to deteriorate for a variety of reasons [of which] the principal one, in my opinion, is not the danger of expanded Arab influence. I shall list the dangers in their order of importance, as follows: (1) The danger of an unsuccessful outcome of *Solel-Boneh's* projects in Turkey, should such a thing happen, Heaven forbid. (2) Continuation of three-way deals in which Israel makes too great a profit, including the continued re-exportation from Israel of Turkish commodities without Turkish authorisation.<sup>8</sup>

While there is a consensus in Israel as to the value of the special relationship with Turkey – to the degree that Israel's desire for rapprochement with Ankara is taken for granted, hence few analyses are published regarding the necessity of cooperation – in Turkey, by contrast, the issue is controversial, prompting extensive debate. The result is that the Turkish press is quite open and differing as to various aspects of the bilateral cooperation. Certain findings published there never appeared in Israeli sources. For example, Turkey's *Aksiyon Magazine* is the only organ to publish what is claimed to be the text of the February 1996 Turkish-Israeli agreement on military cooperation.<sup>9</sup>

### Israel: cherishing the Turkish connection

Important changes clearly mark Israeli policies towards Turkey and a clear thread of "Turcification" is discernible in them. For instance, the country apparently departed (May 1997) from the policy prevailing till then in relation to Turkey's conflict with the Kurds, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took up position unequivocally on Turkey's side, sharply condemning Kurdish terrorism and ruling out the establishment of an independent Kurdish state. Netanyahu went further, claiming there would be no peace between Israel and Syria unless that country called off its support of terrorism, including that of the PKK.<sup>10</sup> These words far transcended Israel's actions in relation to the Kurdish issue. Despite Turkish pleas, Israel had declined to take sides against Kurdish terrorism, even while demanding – and eliciting – firm measures by Turkey against Palestinian, Islamic and Hizbullah terrorism. Furthermore, to avoid deviating from the Israeli low-profile line as regards the Kurds, the accords concluded during the November 1994 visit to Israel by Turkey's Prime Minister, Tansu Ciller, relegated mutual anti-terror efforts to the bilateral *police agreement*,

alongside the drive against drugs and organized crime. Israel found the Turkish definition of “terrorism” in conjunction with “Kurdish” hard to accept, hence Turkish–Israeli cooperation in this domain was excluded from the agreement on strategic cooperation, relegated instead to the policing dominion.<sup>11</sup> Israeli apprehensions hinged principally upon fears of vulnerability to a further terrorist front vis-à-vis the PKK. Indeed, the day following Netanyahu’s declaration, the PKK announced in Beirut that henceforth Israel – like the United States – would constitute legitimate targets for Kurdish counter-attacks.

But there exists also in Israel a persistent pro-Kurdish sentiment lingering from the country’s extensive support for the Kurdish struggle for independence in northern Iraq. (Ariel Sharon, Israeli Foreign Secretary in 1999, said: “It is a known fact that we have good relations with the Kurds in Northern Iraq and especially with Barazani, but we do not have relations with the PKK.”)<sup>12</sup> However, Israel, it seems, did finally acknowledge the Turkish contention that there can be no halfway war against terrorism; Turkey, which acts firmly against anti-Israeli terrorism on its soil, is entitled to Israeli support against the PKK.

Prime Minister Netanyahu, ruling out Israeli–Syrian peace that did not include a Syrian undertaking to halt support for the PKK, likewise conformed with Ankara’s views. Turkey displayed growing unease as it observed Israeli–Syrian peace negotiations, including the possibility of *Israel* lobbying in the United States for Syria’s removal from the lists of states that support terrorism or trade in drugs, without Syria relinquishing first its support for the PKK. Turkey was equally perturbed at the prospect that, should a peace treaty be concluded, Israel’s demand for redeployment of Syria’s army would have it stationing its forces along the Turkish border. Hence, a scaling down of “Israel’s *Ostpolitik*” vis-à-vis the Arab world, Syria in particular, was no cause for regret in Turkey.

It seems also that the Israeli stand in the October 1998 Turkish–Syrian crisis which resulted in the expulsion of Abdullah Ocalan from Damascus and his eventual arrest later on in Nairobi, generally conformed with that of Turkey. When Turkish troops amassed along the border with Syria, Israel announced it would withdraw some of its units from its Syrian front, practically declaring neutrality in the crisis and nullifying the Turkish–Israeli “sandwich” strategy that Syria dreaded. Some in Turkey expressed frustration. (“We weren’t surprised: Israel is known as an ungrateful and unreliable entity, always disappointing you when you need them most.” Or “Apparently, the Turkey–Israel military rapprochement is important as long as it serves Israeli interests.” Or “Israel does not think of anything else but her own interest.”) Other sources viewed differently these Israeli moves and regarded them as complementing the Turkish interest, going so far as to confirm that they came as a result of a specific request from Ankara. The Israeli–Turkish “pincer-like strategy,” used when an ultimatum was posed to the Syrians, was too alienating and could further exacerbate Turkish–Arab relations. The mood in Ankara was that “while believing that no good will come from the Arabs, we still have to accept that we have to

live among 100 million of them.” For those who looked for a proper occasion, the above crisis furnished an opportunity to demonstrate that a third party – be it the Hellenic world or an Arab state – was never the aim of the Turkish–Israeli rapprochement.<sup>13</sup>

Another event apparently reflecting Israel’s growing acceptance of the Turkish view was the decision by the Tel Aviv municipality to bestow honorary citizenship upon Bernard Lewis, a world authority in Islamic and Middle Eastern studies. The literary supplement of the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz* hosted a wide-ranging debate among Israeli historians and orientalists as to whether Professor Lewis deserved the honour, and whether or not he had denied that the Armenians suffered genocide during the First World War. A brief survey of Israel’s academic community would find that it is still “in” to argue that the Armenian massacre fits the genocide definition. The views of the Israeli orientalist, Yehoshua Porat, are thus exceptional: there is no recall of any equally authoritative pronouncement in Turkey’s defense. After categorically rejecting charges of genocide against the Armenians, on the grounds that there is no factual evidence of a high-level Ottoman master plan for their annihilation, Porat adds:

I cannot but express my suspicion – of course unsupported – that there are circles in Israel who find the thrust of Turkish policy hard to swallow. After all, this is a state whose citizens are almost all Muslim, but nevertheless maintains friendly relations with Israel, inclines towards the West, is a member of NATO, and does not share in vilifying the United States as the source of all the afflictions from which the Third World suffers sporadically. I get the impression that Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and Hafez al-Assad’s Syria get a warmer welcome in those circles, whose criticism of Turkey is highly over-done.<sup>14</sup>

A third conclusion – as yet more of an assessment awaiting confirmation and corroboration – relates to the Israeli–Syrian peace contacts, apparently suspended by Israel for the sake of Ankara. Participants in the occasionally strategic talks held between Israel and Turkey maintain the idea that Israel adopted Turkey’s view that Ankara would be harmed by an Israeli–Syrian peace agreement. Such an accord could be expected to enhance Syrian, hence also Kurdish, perhaps even Greek freedom of maneuver for anti-Turkish *démarches*. It is noteworthy that Turkey made public its agreements with Israel in April 1996, *after* publication of the existence of a Syrian–Greek military agreement. The Athens–Damascus accords permit Greek airforce planes to undertake training flights over Syrian air space and receive ground services at Syrian airfields, while likewise granting the Greek navy docking and anchorage facilities in Syrian ports. Despite denials by Greece and Syria regarding the very existence of such an agreement, Turkey repeatedly warned Greece against using Syrian air space: in view of Greece’s access to practically unlimited air space over the Mediterranean, it has no grounds for training its pilots in Syria and paying dearly for ground services. Such a step would be a provocation, insisted Ankara. At first, Israeli officers and officials maintained that Turkey could take on both Greece

and Syria “with one hand tied behind its back.” Israel Defense Forces Commander in Chief, Lieutenant General Lipkin-Shahak, no doubt not a diplomat, dismissed the dread that Ankara affected concerning Cypriot plans to station Russian-made S-300 surface-to-air missiles on the island, by remarking that “Turkey could annihilate Cyprus with its fishing fleet.”<sup>15</sup> Yet, following their meetings with their Turkish counterparts, Israeli negotiators apparently grasped the depth of the Turkish feeling on the Greco–Syrian issue. This might support the view that suspension of Israeli–Syrian contacts was designed *inter alia* to placate Ankara. As already noted, the topic deserves further consideration; if established, it would reflect the degree of “Turkification” Israel is experiencing.

The most vivid illustration may be offered by Israel’s self-control and restraint in the following instance. As a rule, any challenge to the Second World War Jewish Holocaust and its virtually sacrosanct status comes in for unequivocal Israeli condemnation, going as far as total rejection and censure. But in this case, Israel showed self-restraint. In January 1997, members of the Turkish parliament, headed by their speaker, Mustaffa Kalemli, visited Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the national shrine commemorating the Jews massacred in the Second World War. Two of the group were members of the Rafah Partisi (Welfare Party); one of the two, Ahmed Derin, concluded his visit to the shrine with the hope that no institution like Yad Vashem would ever have to be erected again in commemoration of anyone, the Palestinian people included.<sup>16</sup> The restraint that Israel displayed can of course be ascribed to self-interest and profit-and-loss calculations. But it can also be attributed to the growing Israeli awareness that Turkey’s frame of reference, which also embraces the Arab and Islamic dimension, does not always correspond with that of Israel, and Israel therefore cannot expect exclusivity in its relationship with Turkey. Turkey has close ties – in commerce and energy – with Iran. Should Iraq be freed of current sanctions, Turkey will become its main supplier. Syrian–Turkish relations have greatly improved recently, and after a lengthy period without an accredited Turkish ambassador, Damascus has consented to the nomination of a new ambassador.<sup>17</sup> The Israel–Turkey rapprochement is thus just one thread in a thick web of Turkish interests. Furthermore, while Israel endeavors to play down Turkish sensitivities over Greco–Israeli relations (and Ankara’s effective veto of elements thereof – see later), Israel must come to terms with Turkey’s other spheres of interest.

Turkey has its own shock-absorbers in relation to Israel: when the Rafah Partisi was declared illegal in January 1998, the Speaker of the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, told a group of foreign military attachés – including the Turkish representative – that “Till yesterday, I thought there are two democracies in the Middle East. Since yesterday, I’m not so sure, after what happened in Turkey.” The Speaker subsequently withdrew his remarks, praising the robust nature of Turkish democracy, whereupon the incident was written off.<sup>18</sup>

A significant change – and for the first time ever in the three-way relationship between Israel, Greece and Turkey, an overt one – came with Israel’s refusal to expand its military cooperation with Greece. For readily comprehensible

reasons, Greece exhibits great interest in the burgeoning military contacts between Israel and Turkey. Three Greek military attachés are stationed in Tel Aviv; the Israeli military attaché in Rome is also accredited to Athens. In view of Greece's intention of spending 16 billion dollars in the decade to come on procurement of equipment and weaponry and modernization of its army, Israeli arms manufacturers might have been expected to display an interest.<sup>19</sup> However, regardless of Greek requests, Israel's aircraft industry has not taken up the tender for upgrading and modernizing forty Greek airforce F-4 (Phantoms). Likewise, Israel has restricted military exports to Greece to harmless items like bullet-proof jackets, patrol boats without armament, detachable fuel tanks for aircrafts, etc.

Arms sales to Cyprus are exhibited as an illustration of the policy of *SIBAT*, the body responsible for Israel's military exports. As Israeli arms exports to the conflict-ridden island are liable to be harmful to a country friendly to Israel, *SIBAT* limits the quality and extent of Israeli arms sales to Cyprus to "non-lethal weaponry." We should recall that an Israeli-Greek military cooperation agreement (similar to the one signed later between Ankara and Israel) was concluded as far back as December 1994. Israel, however, avoided imbuing the agreement with any real substance. Greece, too, recently called off joint naval exercises, on the grounds – or more plausibly, the pretext – that its navy was too busy intercepting infiltration from Albania and could not spare a single frigate for joint exercises with the Israeli navy.<sup>20</sup> The change in Israeli policy towards Greece is expressed less in the refusal to sell that country this or that item of military hardware, than in public abandonment of the forty-five year old policy of (ostensible) neutrality in Greco-Turkish relations. During the years 1950–90, Israel went so far as to claim that the doleful state of its relations with Greece was due to that country's capitulation to Arab pressure. The 1990s, however, exposed relations between Jerusalem and Athens in a further respect, when Israeli companies declined to take up tenders in Greece lest it be interpreted as detrimental to Turkish interests. Disagreements were reported between the Israeli defense establishment, anxious to avoid fostering relations with Greece for fear of endangering links with Turkey, and the foreign ministry that sought to preserve a balance within the Greco-Turkish-Israeli triangle. Interestingly, the division is different in Greece, where the military establishment is keen for links with Israel, while the foreign ministry is traditionally hostile.

Israel has recently been exposed to two symptoms of Turkish sensitivity. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict threatened to push the Turkish-Israeli relations backwards, in particular when Ankara hopes to lessen the Arab world's animosity pertaining to her relations with Israel, by openly supporting the Palestinians. Often Ankara differentiates between Israel and Zionism, and openly declares that.<sup>21</sup> Apparently, Turkey feels a responsibility for the plight that befell the Palestinians: the Ottomans were the first to permit, during the nineteenth century, the immigration of Zionism-inspired Jewish colonists to Palestine thus starting the conflict there. "We share something in common with the Palestinians," say



Turkish officials, “We were both duped by the Arabs, who stabbed us both in the back, causing us to lose the Empire, and left the Palestinians alone to their fate.” All through the 1990s the Turkish media clearly sided with the Palestinian version of the peace negotiations with Israel, having only minor reservations pertaining to the integrity and talents of the Palestinian leadership. Intermittently, Turkish reporters gave deeper analyses, in addition to almost daily reporting, of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. The general picture – who is to be blamed and for what – has not altered:

The Children of Israel have given the first monotheistic religion to humanity but in the meantime committed their first sin. *Yehuda* has spread the seeds of racism onto the world. He has said, “You Children of Israel are different from all other tribes.” This is how the Jews have committed their first sin. Then they got the blood of Jesus on their hands. And they slowly paid for these sins for 2000 years. Russians have slaughtered tens of thousands of them in every pogrom, the Spaniards were unable to extinguish [all] the *Sepharadim* [Jews of Oriental origin] by killing them. The remaining [Jews who were spared the killing were expelled from Spain in 1492] sought refuge in the arms of the Ottomans. What happened to the *Ashkenazim* [Jews of European origin] was not very different. The grandchildren of the Children of Israel, alias the chosen people of *Yehuda*, paid for being chosen by inhaling *Zyklon B* gas during World War II . . . The Jews who have paid for their sins for thousands of years are making their relatives pay for it in the 20th century. The West gave them Palestine, the land of their Semite relatives, as a present [with the result that] there has been much bloodshed in the Holy Land since the proclamation of the State of Israel.<sup>22</sup>

According to the Turkish media the Palestinians paid a dear price because the powers – the same Christian West that had plotted against Turkey – conspired against them. The Arab side who almost took control over Palestine during the war of 1948, was forced to give in to American and Soviet pressure. As from July 1948, American and Soviet troops were deployed on Israeli soil, thus putting into effect the plan of giving the Jews a state. At the entrance of the Knesset, there is a slogan, “Israel’s borders are from the Nile to the Euphrates.” The reporter told his readers that a map of this kind is in Israeli school books, “planting imperialist ideas in the minds of children.” The Middle East, Iran, Pakistan, the Gulf, Africa and, of course, Turkey, are on Israel’s expansionist list.<sup>23</sup>

Jewish settlements – according to *Radikal* “a knife in the chest of the Palestinians” – is the strategy used by Israel to apply this expansion and establish legitimacy in the land: “Seasonal families stay at one settlement for three months and then move to another one. This is how the policy of creating legitimacy on land works.”<sup>24</sup> *Radikal* knew to say that in accordance with their rabbis’ orders, the settlers kill Palestinians. In case you are wounded or in need of help, a settler will not come to your assistance if you are not Jewish. In fact he will find a way to kill you.<sup>25</sup> What is left for the Palestinians is to defend themselves by acquiring martial arts, karate for instance. However, this enables them to confront the Israelis solely by using their bodies. Had “Bibi” (Benjamin Netanyahu)

been a Palestinian, his right of residence in Jerusalem would be abrogated: a Palestinian, native of Jerusalem, who leaves the city for more than seven years is not entitled anymore to an Israeli identity card ("Blue Card"). Had Netanyahu, who lived and worked in the United States for twelve years, been a Palestinian, he would have been banned from returning to the city.<sup>26</sup>

The words of Zvi Elpeleg, Israel's ambassador to Ankara (1995–97), are worthy of attention. Elpeleg stressed Turkish sensitivity to the Palestinian issue. In his view, a crisis in Israeli–Arab relations would not entail deterioration in Israeli–Turkish ties, but a downturn in relation to the Palestinians would. "Their sensitivity on that point is almost as great as on the Armenian issue," Elpeleg warned. "Many millions in Turkey are interested in nothing outside their own borders more than the Palestinian issue; no government in Turkey can withstand the pressure of those millions."<sup>27</sup> By way of illustration: Turkish journalists smuggled used gas grenades, cartridges and bullets into the chamber of the Israeli Prime Minister to protest against their use by Israeli troops while confronting Palestinians. ("Try to do this in Cankaya Palace in Ankara," said a Turkish officer).<sup>28</sup> Similarly, it is to be doubted whether Israelis have ever heard the foreign minister of a friendly country says anything to match the following dialogue. In response to a question from the *Cumhuriyet*, the Turkish Foreign Minister at the time, Mumtaz Soysal, explained what he meant by "activities defined as terror by Israel." It should be recalled that he was speaking in the year following the Oslo accords, and despite of the spate of terrorist suicide bombings then sweeping Israel:

*Question:* With the phrase "defined as terrorist": do you mean to say that they actually are not so?

*Answer:* Yes. Because not everything is "terrorism." The struggle of Palestine still continues. Palestine has not achieved its wishes completely. Neither have the Palestinians . . . Among them are those who want to continue struggle by defending their rights, they are trying to defend their rights. But a part of the Israeli people is insistent on stamping these efforts as "terrorism."<sup>29</sup>

Ankara insists that there is no resemblance between the Kurdish struggle for self-determination and the Palestinian one, nor any similarity between the two leaders, Ocalan and Arafat. Turks resent any comparisons ("ridiculous analogy," "funny semblance") between the occupation of the northern part of Cyprus and the Israeli one in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. They see, however, the attraction, particularly in Europe, in portraying the Palestinians and the Kurds as parallel cases. Warnings, comparisons and lessons, therefore, were quick to be voiced. When Ocalan ("Apo," i.e. uncle), was facing expulsion from Damascus, as Ankara had insisted, the risks for Turkey were predicted, in particular when the Arafat precedent was quoted:

Unfit for Arafatization (*Arafat Lastiramamak*)

Realistic evaluation of the efforts for the Arafatization of Abdullah Ocalan:

Efforts to try and build a parallel between the lives of Apo and Arafat are in vain. Apo was born within the borders of the Turkish Republic, he is from Urfa. Arafat

was born in Cairo, not in Palestine. His father was of Palestinian origin but lived in the rich quarter of Heliopolis in Cairo. He had sold all his land in Palestine to achieve his ambitions in Egypt. Yassir Arafat has always blamed his father for not leaving him a piece of land in Palestine, but to the outside world he acts as if his father's land has been occupied by Israel. Abdullah Ocalan never had a problem such as not having land, occupation and exile.

Arafat speaks Arabic with Egyptian accent, not Palestinian one. Apo, on the other hand, did not know Kurdish when I met him in 1991. In our interview at the Beka'a he told me that he speaks Turkish, gives orders in Turkish, and thinks in Turkish. Arafat went to university in Cairo, Ocalan attended the Faculty of Political Science in Ankara.

Arafat had behind him the oil sheikhs, kings and dictators . . . This was the force from which Arafat got his strength. He was accepted to the U.N. General Assembly with the votes of the Muslim and Arab nations. Terror was still new and it could be accepted as a struggle of the Palestinians [who were] trying to get back [their] occupied land.

Ocalan does not have all that money and power behind him and terror is now considered a global threat. Still, Turkey should be very careful and should not forget that Arafat started gaining his real power *after* he was out of Syrian control, and he managed to harm relations between Israel and her neighbours, especially Egypt, by opening representative offices in those countries.<sup>30</sup>

Another comparison was made between the Jewish Holocaust and the Armenian claim to have suffered genocide during the First World War. The nine-month prison sentence given to the French Roje Garaudy for questioning the number of Jews killed during the war (according to Garaudy 1.5 million instead of 6 million Jews), raised doubts as to the "intolerance about figures" that a country like France suffers from. Garaudy, according to *Zaman*, "only claims that the figures have been intentionally exaggerated, and unacceptable policies have been built upon these figures." Is this claim not worth investigating, asks *Zaman*? It concludes that "even in Europe academicians are not allowed to investigate and make declarations outside the official view." The comparison with "the incidents of 1915" is clear: "There is a big imbalance between the number of Armenians claimed to have been killed and their actual population. This shows that those who have exaggerated the figures had some other intentions."<sup>31</sup>

The nomination of Ehud Toledano as the Israeli ambassador to Ankara, and the furious response it evoked in Turkey – he was ultimately turned down by Turkey – confronted Israel with the second Turkish sensitivity, this time over accusations of genocide of the Armenians during the First World War. It was – falsely – reported that in a radio program in 1981 Professor Toledano had allegedly accused Turkey of massacring the Armenian people. The terms and expressions the Turkish press employed in relation to Toledano were inflammatory in the extreme – "Toledano [is] an extreme pro-Jewish *Sharia*" – in contrast with the outgoing ambassador, Zvi Elpeleg, known to be a secular Israeli. "Toledano is an admirer of the Armenians and even quarrelled with [his Professor] Bernard Lewis for this reason." And so on.<sup>32</sup> It appears to have been beyond

Toledano's power to overcome the rejection of his appointment to ambassador in Ankara, in view of the multitude of interests that stood to lose thereby. Ali Birnad was right on target with his article in *Sabah*, attributing the scuttling of the Toledano nomination *inter alia* to the "jealousy of his [university] colleagues."<sup>33</sup> Israel and the Israelis are probably far more attentive now to Turkish sensitivities on the Armenian issue. With that, the following quotation is worthy of attention – despite its length and the excessive fantasy to which Toledano was linked. It ties together Turkey's greatness, Armenia, Russia, the Armenian lobby in the United States, Azerbaijan, Israel, Bernard Lewis, Professor Toledano's colleagues at Tel Aviv University, and Benjamin Netanyahu's falling-out with his Foreign Minister David Levy:

Ambassador Toledano is said to be the student of Prof. Bernard Lewis, a well known American historian of Jewish origin, known for his pro-Turkish stand. Toledano, whose pro-Armenian stand and articles on Armenian genocide claims against Turkey have come to light, went so far as to quarrel with Lewis on this issue, and other scholars at Tel Aviv University report that the two professors are not on speaking terms for this reason.

In [a] magazine published in Israel, it was stated that Turkish-Israeli relations might be endangered due to this position of Toledano.

That's not all. It's also stated that Toledano distorted the facts, adopting a position more pro-Armenian than an Armenian, with articles claiming that the Turks conducted a genocide against the Armenians.

It was learned that the appointment of a man known for his clearcut identity in Israel and known to be supported by the Armenian lobby in the USA, is causing concern in the Netanyahu wing of the Israeli government; but [David] Levy, being a member of a coalition party, objected to the bid to withdraw his nomination. It is also claimed that Toledano, not being a professional diplomat, will harm the relations unfolding between Israel and Azerbaijan after Netanyahu's visit to Baku. The Armenian lobby and Armenian-Russian alliance will thus have an important opportunity to torpedo Turkish-Azerbaijani-Israeli relations.

In view of all these developments, we can only say that, hopefully, the ambassador's biased approaches and view have been changed. We hope he has come to grasp the greatness of the Turkish nation and its fairness, and the unfair treatment it has endured. We hope he has achieved a perception of historical facts and reconsidered the position of his own country.

It's not easy to perform duties in Ankara which will be one of the most conspicuous centres of the 21st century. For this reason the eyes of the Turkish nation will be fixed on Toledano.<sup>34</sup>

It should be noted that Israel was aiding Azerbaijan to set aside US Congressional Amendment 907, adopted during the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Passed under pressure from the Armenian lobby in the United States, the amendment precluded US aid to Azerbaijan. Unlike reservations in Congress, the Administration in Washington has been eager to aid Azerbaijan, which borders on Iran and grants American companies oil and gas prospecting concessions.<sup>35</sup>

The Armenian issue did damage the bilateral relations; concurrently, the same Armenian issue proved how solid the relations are. In April 2000 the Israeli Minister for Education, Yossi Sarid, participated in the commemoration gathering held in Jerusalem, in memory of the Armenian victims of the First World War. Sarid announced that from now on Israeli high-school syllabi will include the 1915 plight of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Turkey reacted by officially boycotting the Israeli Independence Day reception held in Ankara a fortnight later. It also raised the possibility – of course, reassured his audience the Turkish Ambassador to Israel, nothing practical, only a theoretical possibility – that Turkey’s Secretary for Education would include the issue of the Jewish Holocaust denial in Turkish schools’ syllabi.<sup>36</sup> Both sides attempted to confine the event to verbal or ceremonial reactions. The Foreign Office in Jerusalem announced the Israeli official stand on the issue: “We accept that many Armenians perished in the wars that marked the end of the Ottoman Empire. We sympathise with the victims of these events. These events that brought so much suffering to the Armenian people should not be forgotten.” The Israeli daily *Ha’aretz* commented that with minor alterations this same official stand could be used to express condolences on the death of Americans in the recent influenza epidemic.<sup>37</sup> An Israeli official in Jerusalem explained:

We are in a deep problem. Like others who enjoy good relations with Turkey, we find ourselves between the hammer and the anvil. One small slip of a tongue and immediately you face a federal case . . . It is extremely painful for us because our Holocaust is recognised by the world. Each time when you talk about the Armenian issue you have to think twice how on earth you should call “this thing.” Turkey takes issue with whoever talks about the “Armenian genocide.” So our position is that we recognise the plight of the Armenians, but we do our utmost to evade historical circumstances and the question of who is to be blamed.<sup>38</sup>

Bitter conflicting views did come to light in Israel following the above. We have already quoted Yehoshua Porat. Shimon Peres referred to the Armenian plight as “tragedy, not genocide.” Tom Segev, a well-known publicist in *Ha’aretz*, mentioned another aspect: the Armenian case was not included in the curriculum of Israeli schools because granting it a recognition, “might pose a competition before the Jewish genocide. The Israeli culture of commemoration does not accept that genocide could be a universal phenomenon. It presents the Jewish extermination as a unique phenomenon.”<sup>39</sup> *Ha’aretz*’s editorial was even harsher: it blamed Israeli diplomacy for deliberately acting to forget the past of another people. This is a problematic stand, warns the newspaper, in particular in light of the Jewish struggle against Holocaust denial. It weakens the moral stand of this fight, said *Ha’aretz*:

The Jewish people, a victim of the Holocaust, must remember the genocide of another people. No diplomacy should stand in the way of it. It is wrong to assume that there is an insoluble contradiction between political interests and a moral stand. The problem is not Turkish pressures. The problem is to give up to them.<sup>40</sup>

Palestinians and Armenians aside, and one easily discerns that the Israeli society highly interests the Turks, in fact on certain occasions attracts and fascinates them. "When you are in Israel, all your problems are solved the moment you show a Turkish passport!" is but one of the enthusiastic descriptions.<sup>41</sup> Many aspects prevailing among the Israelis have become the subjects of inspection by Turkish newspapers. Indeed, few of them have appointed permanent correspondents who report from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.<sup>42</sup> For instance, about the conflict between orthodox and secular Jews: secular shop-owners in Jerusalem found a way to bypass the Jewish orthodox ban to work on the Sabbath by selling their shops to Muslims for one Israeli shekel on Friday and buying them back on Sunday morning. There are similar stories about the Batsheva Ballet Dance Group that was forced to wear modest attire in accordance with religious regulations; the division between men and women in Jewish Hassidic dancing; the difficulties and homesickness of the newcomers to Israel; the Viagra sales boom in Israel; the ban on playing music of the much loved by the Nazis composer Richard Wagner; the fashion show of Israeli bathing suits that carried Egyptian designs ("[Israeli-Arab] Peace on the Podium"); the television commercial about a detergent that could clean even Monica Lewinski's dress; the high-quality politicians [*sic*] that the Israeli coalition government system attracts; and so on.<sup>43</sup> Israel is described as "Little America;" in certain areas it surpasses America. True, you won't find car industry in Israel but you do have the IAI, Israel Aircraft Industry that produces sophisticated technologies and aircraft. And also: "I took a bus from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv . . . Where are we? If this is still the same desert we have been travelling on since Baghdad, then what is this pasture all around me? This is a heaven created on the desert. The journalist in me wants to send out praises to those who have fought the desert with determination and who have won."<sup>44</sup>

The Turkish media attributed one simple reason to all these successes: it is not foreign money that makes the miracle but the high priority and financial assistance given to education, research and development, and industrialization.<sup>45</sup> Israeli freedom of expression fascinates the Turkish correspondents: the television often criticizes the government and could say anything about Netanyahu, could call him a liar, crook, etc., and you will not be prosecuted. Try – if you are brave enough – to do the same to Arafat, Mubarak, King Hussein, Assad: you will immediately be jailed, in fact your life will then be in peril. And the lesson as the *Milliyet* sees it: when the Arabs cherish freedom of speech, they will be able to regain their rights.<sup>46</sup>

Occasionally, however, the above superlatives and their like are balanced by calls for more realistic interpretations for the "Little America" phenomenon. The country is described as the product of the money of rich American Jews, which means that at its fiftieth anniversary (1998) Israel is still an artificial state, heavily dependent on external support. Also, "What a pity" it was to establish the state of Israel: it resulted from the guilt-conscience of the Europeans who had committed the Holocaust plus the hypocrisy of British colonialism, US

interests, and the strong Jewish lobby therein. All made the country built upon a lie, namely: the portrayal of Palestine as an empty place where you could “Give the land without people to the people without a land.”<sup>47</sup> *Zaman*’s Taha Kivanc recorded the following in his “Notes from Jerusalem”:

Our businessmen who found many things to criticize in Amman in relation to the city and the people, were a bit hasty in admiring everything they saw in Israel. Their eye caught the richness and high technology used everywhere in Israel. This is always very effective in impressing people. However, the businessmen did not even care to listen to words such as, “These people have immigrated to Israel already mastering knowledge and know-how. Half of Israel’s national income is US financial aid.” I think, however, that there are two important achievements in Israel: one is that they have turned the desert green, and the other is that they have revived a dead language and are using it as an everyday language. Everything besides these two things can be bought by money or achieved by well-educated people.<sup>48</sup>

Admiration for the other is, many a time, not restricted to one side. Not surprising, therefore, that Israelis often envy the way things are determined and done in Turkey, economy exclusive. “We should talk Turkish to the Palestinians/Hizbullah/Syria/Iraq/Iran,” is the prevalent advice offered in Israeli media, in particular following the Syrian yielding as regards the presence of Abdullah Ocalan in Damascus and the victory of the Turks over the PKK. Turkey’s credit among the Israelis jumped sky-high when its F-15s forced an Iranian aircraft on its way to Damascus to land in Dyarbakir. There its cargo was searched for weapons that Tehran might have shipped to the Lebanese Hizbullah. Israel has also to learn from Turkey how to impose secularism or how to give the coup de grace to the old theocratic order, the same as Mustafa Kemal did, by abolishing the wearing of the fez in 1925. (Israel needs an authoritative, secularly courageous leader like Atatürk, insisted the writer). And, unlike the Israeli political system, the writer called to learn from Turkey how to eliminate the influence of army Generals by not appointing them to political posts. (“Aren’t there anymore civilians in Israel that we choose our leaders from among the Generals?” asked an admirer of the Turkish system). And so on. A selection of the titles of the articles that praise Turkey read: “Talk to Him in Turkish,” “Take Turkey, For Example,” etc.<sup>49</sup>

Turkish authoritative assertiveness does attract the Israelis. Still, the following quotation shows another kind of appreciation for the Turkish way. Note, for instance, the plans to change massively the Yitzhak Rabin Square in Tel Aviv, the place where the Israeli Prime Minister was murdered, and to turn parts of it into a huge parking lot. “The largest public square in Tel-Aviv is being sacrificed . . . but without a public square we are not a public,” declared the writer. However, there exists a remedy, and not so far from Tel Aviv:

Recently I returned from Turkey our neighbour. There, they were wondering how to commemorate one of the most unnecessary battles in human history: the battle of Galipoli . . . After 85 years all the parties to the battle looked for a proper way to remember it, and decided on an international competition on how to re-plan the

place. The great surprise was that the plan that won the contest was the one which strongly recommended neither to change nor to touch the site. His Excellency the City Engineer of Tel-Aviv: you should not go so far, to Paris for instance, to learn about squares, or to learn about the culture of designing public places, or how to deal with a national/international commemoration of a site which is a fixed part in the collective memory of the nation and of the world. Suffice it to stop at the neighboring country. You will then be enlightened.<sup>50</sup>

### Turkey: policies and attitudes towards Israel

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and termination of the cold war have inspired changes in the roles of Israel and Turkey. Both prominent cold war players since the late 1940s, the two countries have been cast into a fixed role with the West, a state of affairs apparently immutable. The collapse of communism put this role in question (more evident in Turkey than in Israel) in both countries, neither being located geographically in the West or Europe, even if their leaders would have wished it otherwise. Likewise, the *Ostpolitik* pursued by each of the two governments – that of Necmettin Erbakan, whose Muslim visions rendered him less than eager for an extended honeymoon with Israel, and Israel's pursuit of a "New Middle East" (overwhelmingly identified with Israel's Labour Party Nobel Prize Laureate Shimon Peres) – served as catalysts in the Israeli-Turkish rapprochement. When Turkey's pro-Western secular military establishment felt threatened by Erbakan's Islamic policies, it stepped up the pressure in the opposing direction, generating a steadily expanding interaction with Israel. Similarly, when the May 1996 newly installed right-wing Netanyahu government in Israel suspended contacts with Syria – thereby meeting Turkish expectations – it was precisely at this point in the premierships of Erbakan and Netanyahu that relations between their two countries scaled to heights previously unknown. Bowing to military demands, Erbakan and the seventeen Refah Partisi ministers of his cabinet endorsed the contract for the upgrading in Israel of Turkish F-4 aircraft. The quid pro quo: consent of the Turkish military to a limited reduction in the size and activity of the multilateral force – actually Anglo-American units (known as Operation Provide Comfort or as Operation Northern Watch), that monitor from Turkey the northern regions of Iraq, north of the thirty-sixth parallel.

The sentiments portrayed here were best depicted by İlhan Selçuk, a left-wing Turkish intellectual not renowned for his pro-Israel sympathies. A summary of his words in *Cumhuriyet* interprets the Israeli-Turkish rapprochement. According to Selçuk, Saudi Arabia and Iran, their mutual rivalry notwithstanding, share the view of secular Kemalist Turkey as a threat. Even if they detest one another, all the "pro-*shari'a*" groups, are the enemies of Turkey. All the Muslim states would sense triumph should secular-Kemalist Turkey collapsed. Moreover, the Refah Partisi is a Trojan horse playing along with these forces hostile to Turkey. Selçuk



goes on to list Turkey's enemies who supported the PKK: Armenia; Greece; Syria; the Cypriot Greeks; Iran; and the Greek and Armenian lobbies in the United States. According to Selcuk, that leaves Turkey with nobody but the Jewish lobby and Israel, and all that is asked of Israel is to discharge its obligations to the Palestinians. Selcuk concludes accordingly that, with Turkey encircled by the hostility generated by cooperation between *shari'a* and Orthodoxy, "it is a vital Turkish national interest to cooperate with Israel." Israel relieves Turkey's isolation imposed by this wall of hostility, simultaneously fielding a Jewish American lobby to counter-balance the Greek and Armenian lobbies.<sup>51</sup>

Ambassador Zvi Elpeleg explained Turkey's interest in Israel: it is helpful that the Turks believe in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, and deduce therefrom that Israel is capable of swaying the whole world.<sup>52</sup> The Turkish press often describes Israel, in particular the James Bond like operations of the Mossad, as capable of furnishing Turkey with intelligence and services beyond any imagination.<sup>53</sup> Turkey notes the different standards applied towards Israel. For example, German police treated leniently the shooting by Israeli security at Kurds who stormed (February 1999) the Israeli consulate in Berlin in the aftermath of the kidnapping of Abdullah Ocalan: notwithstanding Israel's vehement denials, it was widely assumed that the Mossad assisted Turkey in locating the PKK leader. If it was Turkish security, Germany's reaction would have been totally different, complained the Turkish the press. In a similar event in Berne some years ago, the Turkish ambassador to Switzerland had been declared *persona non grata*.<sup>54</sup> The conclusion: let us befriend the Israelis.

In fact, Israel and its subsidiaries do undertake ramified lobbying efforts on Turkey's behalf. Shimon Peres's intervention with his colleagues in the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the Socialist International, convinced many of them to shelve their objections to the customs union that the EU concluded with Turkey early in 1996. Israel has acted similarly on Turkey's behalf in the United States, particularly in toning down congressional criticism of Turkey over its treatment of the Kurds, human rights, rights of political association and freedom of speech, imprisonment of journalists, restrictions on free press, etc. The American Jewish Committee (AJC) and *B'nai B'rith* are the forefront of acting on behalf of Turkey in the United States however, often at a cost – the anger and distaste of other ethnic groups, especially the Armenian and Greek Americans, and criticism in the American public opinion. "I can not stress enough that for Americans, a free press – that is the freedom to express contrary views in print – is absolutely fundamental to our definition of a functioning democracy," stated the representative of the AJC to his Turkish audience in Istanbul. "I am selfish," he added: improvements in the above fields would deprive hostile lobbies of ammunition and help winning the battles on the Capitol Hill on Turkey's favour.<sup>55</sup> Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov has also protested over Israel supporting the Turkish campaign against the stationing of S-300 missiles on Cyprus.<sup>56</sup> In all, Israeli efforts have achieved a mixed success: the US Administration is interested in closer ties with Turkey, but

Congress remains critical. The alternative seemed obvious as the *Radikal* analyzed it: "Turkey is in search of a country to buy arms without being confronted with the human-rights, Kurdish and Cyprus issues, and Israel needs a country to sell its arms to."<sup>57</sup>

Similarly disappointing was the flat rejection the EU handed out to Turkey in Luxembourg, in December 1997, and the ensuing fallout in the EU-Ankara relations. Turkish Airlines' renewal of its fleet of a 2.5 billion dollar budget went for forty-nine Boeing 737-800 airliners, granting the US manufacturer preference over its European Airbus competitors. While Prime Minister Rabin and Secretary Peres found it relatively easy to promote the Turkey of President Ozal and of Prime Minister Ciller, the succeeding Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu – himself not exactly *persona grata* in the West (he complained that the American press portrayed him as "A Western Saddam Hussein") – certainly had it much harder to intervene on behalf of Turkey's Muslim Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan.<sup>58</sup>

The Israeli-Turkish rapprochement was a further episode in the domestic stand-off, setting Turkey's Western, secular, military establishment at loggerheads with the religious parties and organizations. It looks as if Turkey's secular military establishment dictated a public policy of rapprochement with Israel, in spite of domestic Muslim opposition, sometimes disregarding complaints over the flouting of proper democratic procedures in implementing ties with Israel, and regardless of Refah's traditional anti-Israel and anti-Semitic positions (more of which later).<sup>59</sup> Turkey's Islamic press linked efforts to close down the Imam schools (*Imam Hatip Lycee*) to the collaboration between Turkish Generals and Israel.<sup>60</sup> Particular indignation was directed against General Cevik Bir, Turkey's Deputy Commander-in-Chief, who was portrayed as tough and extremely anti-religious. It should be recalled that Bir is the Turkish signatory on the military cooperation accords with Israel.

Domestic Turkish differences may also be linked to the events that erupted early in February 1997 in the Ankara suburb of Sincan, a working-class town, 25 miles from Ankara. "Jerusalem Day" was marked there by anti-Israel protests, with stone-throwing at actors depicting Israeli soldiers, the burning of the Israeli flag, and a vigorously anti-Israel speech – also calling for adoption of the Muslim *shari'a* as Turkey's future law – from the Iranian ambassador Raza Bageri. The latter cursed and reviled the United States, and promised Sadat's fate would befall anyone signing agreements with Israel. The reaction of the Turkish army was exceptionally forceful. The following day, tanks, personnel carriers and other military vehicles churned up the streets of Sincan. A military spokesman denied any connection between the military movements and the Muslim rally. ("We held routine maneuvers. That is the normal route the tanks take. Are they supposed to hover over the neighborhood?"). Sincan mayor, Bekir Yildiz, of the Refah Partisi, was dismissed from his post on the orders of the Interior Minister. Indicted with others on charges of disrupting public order, aiding an armed gang, and disseminating religious hatred, he was sentenced to four

years and seven months' imprisonment. The Iranian ambassador was declared *persona non grata*, whereupon Iran expelled the Turkish ambassador and another diplomat. (In September 1997 the two ambassadors returned to their respective posts).<sup>61</sup>

A further expression of Islamic protest was the attempt on 19 May 1996 to assassinate President Demirel in the west Turkish city of Izmit. The would-be assassin justified his act as a response to the conclusion of the military agreement with Israel. In addition, the Muslim press knew to tell about the Israeli ambassador's excessive involvement in Turkey's domestic affairs, serving as the "confidant" of the Generals in plotting the toppling of Erbakan's government.<sup>62</sup>

### Refah and Israel

Of special interest is the domestic Turkish response – by the Refah party primarily – to relations with Israel. We have already noted that bilateral relations flourished – contrary to Refah's declared wishes – particularly during Necmettin Erbakan's term as Prime Minister. This calls for a more detailed explanation.

The Refah and its leaders adopted intransigent positions vis-à-vis Israel, notably so prior to Erbakan's elevation to Prime Minister, but it was also evident during his incumbency. Islamic organs depicted Israel as "abnormal" by comparison with existing states. Not merely the state of its inhabitants, Israel is also the state of all Jews, every Jew in the world has the right to settle there, yet it possesses neither constitution nor recognized boundaries.<sup>63</sup> Israel's creed, Judaism, was described as a fundamentally political religion, actually the most political of all faiths. Its aim is to expand from the Nile to the Euphrates, actually to Nevsehir in Kapadokia and to Sanliurfa in the southeast of Turkey: the two blue stripes in the Israeli flag symbolize the Tigris and the Euphrates. Israel, thus, is a double enemy of Turkey: she harbours expansionist dreams pertaining to her territory, and supports the establishment of a Kurdish state, clearly contrary to Turkey's interests. The leadership of the Fazilet party – successor to the Refah – termed Israel as a "questionable country of three million," which means that for a huge country like Turkey to look to Israel for guidance in its foreign policy, "is not only a historical mistake but an international scandal." Furthermore, a Turkish newspaper explained that the Refah had to close down, eventually to be succeeded by the Fazilet, to get rid of the "Zionist and Jewish domination" among its high echelons, in particular to purify itself of the corrupting influence of the powerful Turkish Jewish community.<sup>64</sup>

Anyone concluding an agreement with Israel must be on constant alert, said the Refah, for Jews love no one but themselves. Anyone in close contact with Jews is never content, as experience has shown over the generations.<sup>65</sup> Israel also foments dissension between Turkey and its neighbours: even though Turkey and Iran have had no border conflict for centuries, Israel was inciting Turkey against Iran, or revealing the close military secrets of Turkey's neighbours (for example:

Turkey was provided with the secrets of the Syrian MIG-29).<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, at cocktail parties the Israeli embassy holds, alcohol is consumed like water and toasts are drunk “to honour the massacre of Muslims. Every imaginable evil occurred at these Independence Day parties.”<sup>67</sup> But Turkey is not alone: Israel had become the problem of the entire Muslim world, for its establishment had shunted the Jewish problem from Europe to Asia, from the Christian world to the Muslim sphere. As far as Muslim Turkey is concerned the danger is double: the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul pursues the same plans as the Jews have in the past. The latter waited for 2000 years to establish a state, finally realized it by buying land during the time of the British Mandate over Palestine. Alas, this is the same tactic used by the Greeks in Turkey today.<sup>68</sup>

The conclusions as to the policy Turkey should adopt towards Israel are self-evident: the close bilateral relationship with Israel would transform Turkey into a Middle Eastern country detached from Europe or into a confrontation state in conflict with Iraq, Syria and Iran – effectively with the entire Arab world. Moreover, the rapprochement with Israel is at the expense of potential Turkish links with the Balkan states, Greece, and the Turkic republics of Central Asia. All this would be a boon to Israel, but a burden on Turkey: the latter had paved the road but Israel would reap the fruits. The conclusion: “Let us not make Israel our enemy but let us not get too close.”<sup>69</sup> Defining the Israeli-Turkish rapprochement as the most significant development in Turkey’s foreign policy in the past fifty years, the writer, Aydin Menderes of the *Refah*, drew the disconcerting conclusion that Turkey has no proper assessment of the drastic consequences and damage arising from this change. “Unrestricted Turko-Israeli friendship is unrealistic,” he affirmed.<sup>70</sup>

Many in Turkey found these anti-Israeli, even anti-Semitic tones disturbing. Several months ahead of the formation of the Erbakan government, President Demirel offered the following comments in an address to Turkey’s National Security Council:

Are the Turks, who did not engage in anti-Semitism 500 years ago, now to become anti-Semites? . . . Was the Islam of 500 years ago more progressive than the Islam of our time? Is that which was not done then [i.e. anti-Semitism, persecution] to be done now? If *Refah* achieves office, it will have to display tolerance and equality, which were granted to Jews, Armenians and Greeks by the Sultan 500 years ago.<sup>71</sup>

Indeed, when the *Refah* took office, a change did become evident. Amazingly, when Erbakan’s term of office came to an end, his government found itself praised for its activist policy towards Israel! *Refah* representatives did not boycott Israel. On the contrary, at the governmental, parliamentary and municipal levels, *Refah* ministers, members of parliament, and mayors acted to reassure the Jewish community, as well as holding overt contacts with diplomats from the Israeli embassy. It seemed that above all the benefit of Turkey’s interests called for businesslike relations with Israel, devoid of the ugly rhetoric mentioned above.<sup>72</sup> The Islamic press even underwent a process of “soul-searching.”

Its conclusion held the Refah Partisi (RP) to blame for the situation wherein Israel was Turkey's sole friend. Were it not for Refah's enmity towards the West, Europe, and the EU, Turkey would not have been left with no ally but Israel.<sup>73</sup>

On leaving office in mid-1997, the Erbakan government (including, it will be recalled, the Refah along with Tansu Ciller's "True Path Party," better known as the Refah-Yol coalition), gained startling praise for the policy of rapprochement with Israel adopted during its term in power. Ambassador Elpeleg likewise offered his praises. In response to the question: "What is preferable: a meek Erbakan within the government, or an Islamic movement – unbridled, anti-Israeli and anti-Western – excluded from power?" he replied:

Things look different when seen from the Turkish end. There are numerous advantages to Erbakan being in power – first and foremost from the viewpoint of the grave socio-economic difficulties afflicting Turkey. Erbakan's party is presently the only party to take heed of the tribulations of the millions deserting the villages in the East and streaming into the large cities, the only party attempting to combat retardation.<sup>74</sup>

We shall conclude this section of the chapter by quoting the words of Nazif Akumus in *Yeni Gunaydin*, where he summed up the Refah–YOL coalition and its Israeli policy, suggesting, in "a mixture of humour and reality," that Israel would miss Erbakan:

During the *Refah–Yol* government, it was assumed that relations with Israel would be impaired (albeit not suspended) and that the warm atmosphere would cool down and that there would be a reversal to the previous climate. However, Necmettin Erbakan surprised everybody in this matter, as in others. He contributed to fostering the relations with Israel, whom he had been accusing for years of being the architect of "Zionism." So much so that the news arriving from Israel last month, following the demise of the *Refah–Yol* government . . . was accompanied by remarks such as, "we were more comfortable, and our relations were more mature, during the *Refah–Yol* government." What's more, the headlines of an Israeli paper – "we miss the *RP* government" – reflected a mixture of humour and reality.

Although the agreements with Israel evoked reactions in the Arab world and angered some radical groups in Turkey, we consider it the most appropriate policy of recent years in Turkish foreign policy. Particularly on the terrorist issue, we believe that both countries, marching hand in hand, will take the Middle East a long way forward. We have observed some of the results and we have more hopes for the future.<sup>75</sup>

### **Turkey–Israel: the military aspect**

Israeli–Turkish military cooperation touches upon a number of principal domains: air, sea, land (infantry, armour), aircraft industries, armament industries, missile manufacture, intelligence, and so on. The financial aspect of this interaction is unknown – modernization of Turkish military planes and armour

in Israel is among the few items whose cost has been made public – but is easily assessed as running into hundreds of millions of dollars if not more. The flow is not exclusively one way – that is to say, Israeli military sales to Turkey. On the contrary, Israel pays for use of sophisticated Turkish military installations and installs Turkish-made components in its weaponry. Cooperation is close, institutionalized and structured: steering committees, regular meetings, strategic dialogues at fixed intervals, with the hierarchy of deliberations reaching the most senior echelons, i.e., defense secretaries or even higher. Sales of Israeli weapon systems to Turkey frequently include cooperation with local manufacturers who produce some of the components, or share in assembling the final product. Thus, systems for locating and rescuing pilots are manufactured in Israel (by the Tadiran corporation), but assembled in Turkey by the local munitions concern, Aselsan.<sup>76</sup>

The Reliant Mermaid, the annual American–Turkish–Israeli tripartite naval rescue exercise held in the Eastern Mediterranean since early 1998, hinged upon the purely humanitarian effort of maritime rescues. The parties thereto were revealed to the public, leaving room for conjecture that Israeli–Turkish interaction, the surprising Jordanian attendance (composing together “The region’s three sane countries”),<sup>77</sup> and the American backing it receives, are now sufficiently robust and profound to permit the parties to exhibit their shared non-military endeavors. Indeed, the navies of Turkey and Israel hold maritime exercises, and operation Reliant Mermaid was preceded by naval manoeuvres in the summer of 1996. In addition, the Israeli navy trains at Turkish diving facilities, where it benefits from lower prices than the equivalent cost of such special training in Germany or Britain.<sup>78</sup>

Intermittently – arousing by this the concern and wrath of its Arab sisters – Jordan deviates from the Middle Eastern Arab vehement objection to the Israeli–Turkish cooperation. Accordingly, Jordanian officials and navy officers attended the Reliant Mermaid and other Turkish–Israeli military forums. This is an understandable, prudent move, by an inherently weak country – more than 3 percent annual population growth, 30 percent unemployment, 30 percent living below the poverty line, 3,500 dollar GNP per capita, a 7 billion dollar foreign debt – which is periodically threatened by its mightier Arab neighbours, as well as by Muslim and Palestinian radicalism. Started in 1996, secret Turkish–Jordanian military cooperation – secret for fearing other Arab countries’ vociferous condemnation – was extended to the above mentioned trilateral contacts. Interestingly, it was Jordan’s King Hussein who initiated this extension. In April 2000 a Turkish jet fighter crashed, its pilot killed while training in Jordan, thus revealing the extent of Turkish–Jordanian cooperation. More intriguing is the Jordanian airforce becoming the third “leg” to the aerial interaction between Turkey and Israel. A low-profile 1984 Turkish–Jordanian military cooperation agreement, turned in the late 1990s into intensive interaction, “the most significant cooperation [that Turkey has] other than NATO.” It included regularly conducted reciprocal high-level military visits, a telephone hotline service

between military commanders, exchanges of troops for training purposes, and aircraft use of one another's air space for training runs. The Turkish airforce provided training programs to Jordanian pilots and ground personnel: Jordanian F-16 pilots underwent flight simulation training in Turkey, and Turkish-built CN-235 light transport aircraft were leased to Jordan. Exchanging infantry troops increased steadily since 1997: from infantry squads, to fully equipped battalions, to entire divisions in 1999. Land forces from both countries are trying to familiarize themselves with the different topographic conditions of Turkey and Jordan, and the troops from both countries were transported with Turkish C-130 (Hercules) cargo aircraft. Most interestingly, both armies have been training each other in cartography and in language. Military teachers from both countries are assigned to one another's military academics, where Jordanians teach Arabic to Turkish cadets and Turks teach Turkish to Jordanians.<sup>79</sup>

Israeli-Turkish military cooperation is reported in detail in world media, and we shall list here only its principal elements. Most of the bilateral military exercises are kept under heavy secrecy. Computerized battlefield simulations for the land forces are conducted regularly in Turkey and Israel. In one of the war games both countries troops – up to the battalion level – served as peacekeepers in a virtual country examining, *inter alia*, their ability to act in harmony. Israeli officers found these simulations to be of particular value because of the experience the Turkish side has gained in similar NATO exercises.<sup>80</sup>

The modernization in the Israel Aircraft Industry (IAI) of Turkish planes – fifty-four F-4s (Phantoms) and forty-eight F-5s – at a cost, including interest, of 900 million dollars, is probably the most publicized military deal done between the two countries.<sup>81</sup> Under the December 1996 agreement, upgrading of the F-4s is to be completed by 2006–8; the first plane will be dispatched back to Turkey thirty-three months after its arrival in Israel. (Turkish critics claimed that the F-4s would end their metal life in 2010 and shortly afterwards the planes would have to be grounded, hence the entire package lacks any military or economic rationale.) The Turkish planes are to undergo structural improvements, and be fitted with radar systems, computerized aeronautical systems, navigation systems, electronic warfare systems and armament to improve the planes' performance in bombing missions. The IAI also will do the upgrading of the Turkish airforce C-130 cargo aircraft. The Israeli C-130 modernization package solves the financial problem of airforces that have hundreds of C-130 but are finding it difficult to replace them with the modern version (C-130J). Among other benefits, these upgrading projects are of importance to Israel in creating thousands of jobs in its aircraft industry.<sup>82</sup>

The contract for modernization of the F-4s was prefaced by a February 1996 agreement for mutual military visits, training and exercises, dispatch of observers to oversee military exercises, staff exchanges, and acquisition of military know-how. By virtue of this agreement – concluded for a five-year term and subsequently to be extended annually – the two airforces and navies are to hold mutual visits and joint exercises. Concomitantly, the agreement stresses that

when the soldiers of either signatory are on the territory of the other, they shall not be involved in conflicts between the host state and any third party.<sup>83</sup>

The training exercises of the two airforces are held eight times annually, a week each time, four deployments in each country. The joint exercises in Turkey (at first joint exercises were excluded, hence the Israelis trained without the participation of Turkish planes, without armament, and without electronic surveillance equipment), are held at the Konya firing range. Overland exercises are a novelty for the Israeli pilots, improving their skills in dealing with land targets; due to Israel's diminutive size, the Israeli airforce generally trains over the Mediterranean. Turkish pilots train at Israel's computerized firing range, and at the Nevatim airfield. In June 2001 a triple cooperation took place when American Air Force F-16s deployed in Germany joined the training over Konya. (The Anatolian Eagle, the tri-party aerial cooperation for 2002, was supposed to include thirty warplanes from each of the three participants).<sup>84</sup>

There were also non-combat features in the two airforces' activity; their interaction is so intensive that they could also afford the ceremonial side. For instance, Israeli F-15s took part in an aerial display in Turkey (June 2001), to celebrate the ninetieth anniversary of the Turkish airforce. Likewise, Turkish airforce senior officers and combat pilots came to Israel and participated in a highly televised event to commemorate the flight of two Ottoman pilots ("the Neil Armstrong and Charles Lindberg of Turkey"). The two crashed (1913) with their small French-made aircraft near the Sea of Galilee, on their way from Istanbul to Alexandria.<sup>85</sup>

Another domain wherein Israel and Turkey – and since 1999 the Royal Jordanian airforce – collaborate is their airforces' intentions to establish a radar network to pinpoint and identify migration routes of predatory birds in the autumn and spring, to minimize the chances of aircraft–birds collision. Altogether, some ninety Turkish F-16 pilots have already received training in relation to bird–plane collisions and related Israeli safety regulations. (In 1995 an Israeli F-15 crashed, its two pilots killed, following a collision with a bird. During the last twenty-five years 170 European and Israeli military aircraft were badly damaged, and more than thirty pilots killed, in aircraft–bird collisions.) Seven radar stations are to cover Turkish and Israeli airspace, providing updated information on bird migration along the Europe–Africa route. Turkey will be able to give Israel and Jordan a two-day warning of the autumn migration, while Israel and Jordan will provide Turkey with a similar alert in advance of the spring migration.<sup>86</sup> It seems that the same thinking that the Reliant Mermaid disseminated, is applicable here as well: the real interaction between the air forces is sufficiently robust which enables them to exhibit their shared non-military endeavors

When the airforces' training proved successful, other areas were included. Sales were reported of the Israeli Python 4 air-to-air missiles to Turkey and of the Israeli made EHUD reconstruction system for the Turkish airforce dog-fight training. (EHUD enables the reconstruction of all flight stages, plus a warning system



against mid-air collisions between aircraft.) Refuelling tankers were also supplied to the Turkish airforce; the cost would be covered by credit given by Israeli banks to the Turkish airforce. In August 1996, an agreement was concluded between the two countries' arms industries. Various publications point to Israeli–Turkish collaboration in manufacture and sale of the Popeye surface-to-air missiles; Turkish manufacture of the Israeli infantry rifle, Galil; formulation of defensive doctrines against ballistic missiles; eventual Turkish participation in production of Israel's Hetz (Arrow) anti-missile-missile; and joint manufacture of the jet-propelled, 400 km. range Delilaha cruise missile. It was also reported that the Turks voiced great interest in intelligence and other data transmitted by the OFEK satellite that Israel has recently launched into space.<sup>87</sup>

The offer of the Israeli Merkava (Chariot) Mark 3 tank for sale to Turkey, and modernization of Turkey's M60A3 (Patton) tanks, mark growing interaction between the two countries in relation to their ground forces. Turkey's armoured units comprise 3,000 Patton tanks, 900 of which are suitable for upgrading. Israeli tank-promotion proposals include fitting the Patton with a 120 mm Merkava gun, endowing the aging tank with new artillery capabilities in range and the penetrative power of its shells. The Patton's American engine will be replaced by the 1,000 hp German MTU one. In all, the upgrading project will include improvement in the tank's artillery capability; an improved capacity for survival by more effective armouring; improvement in the precision of the "tankionics" by installation of an advanced fire-control system and command systems; day and night vision systems for the tank commander and gunner; and improving the tank's performance by installation of a stronger engine, etc.

The saving in time and money makes it probable that the Turkish army will adopt the Israeli offer: modernization of a Patton takes two months, at a cost ranging between 1 million and 2.25 million dollars; a new tank, it should be recalled, costs 5–6 million dollars. (Indeed, the Turkish army has examined the procurement of new tanks – the Abrahams, the LeKlerk, the Challenger, the Leopard, and the T-90 Main Battle Tank, offered to it by the United States, France, the UK, Germany and Russia, respectively.) Within a short while major parts of the work could be done in Turkey in a production line for upgraded Pattons, offered by TA'AS, the Israeli military industry, to MKEK, its Turkish parallel.

But the tank deal is of wider importance: closer bilateral relations require Israel to discard the veil of secrecy surrounding its weapons development programmes. With growing collaboration between the two defense establishments, Israel increasingly shares its arms production secrets with Turkey. This becomes obvious with the offer to sell Turkey the Merkava tank: as part of the agreement on cooperation in military technology, Israel is willing to set up production lines for the Merkava in Turkey. Israel's arms supply has thus been attractive to Turkey because it is followed by the transfer of military technology and know-how. (There is one exception: the transfer of Israeli technology or weapon systems that were developed with American participation is subject to US approval, which is not always granted.)

This clearly coincides with Ankara's declared policy of becoming more self-sufficient in meeting its own military requirements. Mutual trust thus brings about mutual interests that produce mutual dependency, and all combine to create collaboration in the most sensitive and secretive domains. Next to the close cooperation that the IDF, IAI and TA'AS have with the US armed forces and military establishment, the level of intimacy with the Turkish military is of the highest degree.<sup>88</sup>

A number of elements here come together: Israel's position as fifth in rank among the world's arms producers; Turkish plans for arms procurement, modernization and refitting for its army which is the largest in Europe and second only to the US army in NATO. Approximately one-third of Turkey's annual military budget is devoted to modernization and weapons upgrading. These plans run in the stunning range of 150 billion dollar over the next twenty-five years (60 billion dollars for the ground forces, 25 billion for the navy and 65 billion for the airforce). And, as noted, the fact that local production of weapon systems covers a mere 21 percent of Turkey's needs produce calls for more self-sufficiency. In addition, Israel is ready – in particular its Foreign and Defense ministries – to increase its imports from Turkey and to lower tariffs and customs on imported Turkish goods (cement, cast iron, textiles, food, agriculture products, etc.), even at the expense and protest of local producers who face bankruptcy. The story was apparently a simple one: the economic crisis in the Far East strongly hit Turkish steel exports to that region. The next step was the damping of the Israeli market with cheap Turkish steel. Turkish iron, offered in Israel for 230 dollar a ton, is cheaper by 40 dollars in comparison to locally produced cast iron. NESHER, the Israeli cement industry, was more successful: it managed to keep its monopoly by enforcing a high tax over the import of Turkish cement, thus infuriating Turkish cement exporters and Israeli customers, who look for cheaper cement. The need to buttress the strategic cooperation justifies Israeli deficits in its civil trade with Turkey.<sup>89</sup>

Turkey is also considering the manufacture of a helicopter suited to its needs, and is looking for a partner; it intends to produce in Turkey some 95 percent of the aircraft's components. Thus, Turkey's defense needs, the Israeli arms industry, and Israel's willingness to share with Turkey its manufacturing techniques, and its readiness for joint production of weapons, thereby stepping up Turkey's local output, all combine to generate the expansive and qualitative military cooperation portrayed here.<sup>90</sup>

Intelligence cooperation constitutes a principal span in Israeli-Turkish rapprochement. This is a domain in which speculation is rife, but Turkey's location between the three states of special interest to Israel (Syria, Iraq, Iran), and Israel's joint border with Syria (a matter of interest to Turkey), leave little scope for assuming anything but the existence of close Israeli-Turkish intelligence ties. The two countries act extensively in scrutinizing initiatives for the development of non-conventional weaponry in the Middle East, keeping watch on occurrences of radicalism, and ideological or religious terrorism, threats to energy

sources in the Middle East and Central Asia, developments in the Muslim republics of Central Asia and Iranian influence in that region, etc. Intelligence cooperation between Israel and Turkey comprises exchanges of information, routine intelligence briefings, analyses of data, including that collected by Israeli satellites, and tripartite deliberations involving agencies from the United States, Israel and Turkey.

### Civil cooperation

With the purpose of tempering criticism, domestic and external, over its military collaboration with Israel, Turkey stresses that the military element is no more than one portion of the interaction between the two countries. The contract for modernizing the Phantoms is nothing extraordinary, claimed the Turkish paper *Zaman*, citing the then Foreign Minister, Tansu Ciller, to specify details of existing agreements between the two countries. Israeli–Turkish annual trade already reaches a volume of one billion dollars – weapons and tourism excluded – the largest volume of bilateral trade between any two countries in the Middle East. Fifteen percent of Turkey’s Middle Eastern trade – oil-producing countries inclusive – is with Israel. The Israeli–Turkish Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed in 1996 and ratified in April 1997, and the custom-free arrangements and agreements for the avoidance of double taxation that each country has or plans to conclude (for instance, Israel with the United States, Turkey with the EU, etc.), opened new venues. Current trade already enjoys these agreements: Turkey sells duty-free products to Israel; Israel adds its own finishing and sells them free of duty to the United States. Indeed, since the ratification of the FTA and the inclusion of textile and agricultural products in the agreement, the bilateral trade volume increased by 100 percent. All project 2 billion dollars or more in mutual trade from the early years of the twenty-first century. Optimists claim that multi-billion figure to be on top of military trade and the movement of tourists between the two countries. Alongside close military ties – roughly one-third of bilateral relations – there is extensive and much larger civil interaction between Turkey and Israel, with great potential for further expansion and longevity. The bodies that plan the future relations stressed they were aiming at a realistic 4 billion dollar annual bilateral cooperation.<sup>91</sup>

*Zaman* specified thirteen spheres of Israeli–Turkish agreement and cooperation, correct for October 1996, eleven of them of non-military in nature.<sup>92</sup> This interaction is to be found in the fields of culture, education and science; cooperation relating to environment and nature protection; mail and telecommunications; the campaign against smuggling of drugs and narcotic substances; health and agriculture; regulation of trade free of customs and duties; encouragement and protection of financial investments; prevention of dual taxation; agreements on technical and economic cooperation, etc. For comparison with Israeli–Turkish trade links, it is worth studying Turkey’s commercial ties with Greece.

Overshadowed by the dispute between the two countries, mutual Turkish-Greek trade attained a volume of a mere 430 million dollars (year 1995) for a joint population that comprises 75 million. Businessmen from the two countries agreed that, were mutual trade to reach 2 billion dollars, politicians in Ankara and Athens would be more circumspect about disrupting bilateral relations.<sup>93</sup> In view of the data relating to current trade, and the outlook for the years to come, Israel and Turkey seem unlikely to allow the disruption of relations between them.

Israeli-Turkish trade has taken a significant quantum leap. In 1991, mutual trade totaled 100 million dollars; by 1995, it had passed the 440 million dollar mark; and by 2000 it approached the 1 billion dollar target. As a further illustration, in 1987, Turkish exports to Israel totaled 19.8 million dollars, while Israeli exports to Turkey came to 34.3 million dollars. In other words, mutual trade totaling 54.1 million dollars is less than 5.5 percent of the current figures.

Up to 1993, Israel held the upper hand – its exports to Turkey exceeded Turkish exports to Israel. As of 1994, Turkey has steadily pulled ahead, with an annual surplus of 50 million dollars in its favour. Turkish exports to Israel include, among other things, textiles, industrial products, food products, cement, cast iron, building material, electronics, glass, stone items, car tyres, raw materials, grains, cement, and major construction projects like the NATBAG 2000, the extension of the Ben-Gurion airport in Tel Aviv. The main constituents of Israel's exports to Turkey are chemicals, plastics, computers, air conditioners, medical equipment, telecommunications, drilling and seismic mapping, medical insurance policies for the use by Turkish citizens in Israeli hospitals, irrigation equipment, etc. In February 2000, six agriculture irrigation projects totaling 600 million dollar, part of Turkey's GAP (Southeastern Anatolia Project), were allocated to Israeli companies. By virtue of its geographical proximity, Turkey's high-tech exports to Israel, including products of assembly electronics, compete successfully with electronic firms from the Far East, as well as with their Israeli counterparts. The average monthly wage of a Turkish production worker is 300–400 dollars; an engineer makes 1,000 dollars. Parallel Israeli figures are 300 percent higher. In 1992, for instance, monthly minimum wage in Turkey was 210.80 dollars, the equivalent figure in Israel was 507 dollars. Since the late 1990s the gap has widened because of the economic crisis that Turkey suffers from. However, one of the results of the crisis has been that more Israeli companies have moved their factories to Turkey; on average their spending on labour wages has reduced by 58 percent.<sup>94</sup>

Israeli-Turkish commerce is also affected by Turkey's trade links with the EU. Under the customs union agreed in January 1996, duties on goods traded between Turkey and the EU are being phased out progressively – 70 percent of the reductions had been completed by August 1993, the remainder are in the process of accelerated elimination. However, elimination of Turkish duties on imports from the EU had a detrimental effect upon Israeli exports to Turkey and their competitiveness with the European products. This was partly rectified when the Turkish-Israeli free trade zone came into effect.<sup>95</sup>

Israeli tourism to Turkey is likewise a flourishing Turkish export sector, so is the joint venture of marketing Turkey and Israel together to tourists from Japan and the United States. Some 350,000 Israelis have visited Turkey annually since 1994 – altogether, 15 percent of the Israelis who took trips abroad chose Turkey – spending an average of 1,000 dollars per head, while their casino wagers (i.e. losses) come to 1.5 *billion* dollars annually. For comparison, the annual sum total of all betting in Israel is 1.5 billion dollars.<sup>96</sup> With an annual turnover of 1.85 billion dollars, the tourist industry further tilts the bilateral trade balance in Turkey's favor. The number of Israelis visiting Turkey has recently dropped: in 1997 it was down to 300,000 as it also was in 2001. The reduction in numbers of casinos is one reason, but the Turkish ambassador to Israel explained that "Israeli tourists want to travel overseas." In other words, Turkey has become "too Israeli" for their taste, and they see no obvious difference between a vacation there or at home. Still, by the year 2002, the number had not declined any further.

Israeli tourism in Turkey, and Israeli-Turkish commerce, reflect the robust character of bilateral relations. Nothing can compare with civilian trade as an illustration of the extent of interstate relations. Only a calm climate of confidence in long-term relations could facilitate trade on the scale specified. Tourists and investment in tourism – possibly the element most indicative of a friendly, relaxed atmosphere, and confidence in its preservation – are the most prominent characteristics of extensive non-military relations between Israel and Turkey. In 1986, 7,000 Israelis visited Turkey; in 1992 160,000; and, as already noted, from 1994 onwards some 300,000–350,000 annually, out of some 2 million Israelis touring the world each year.

Cultural Turkish–Israeli exchanges thrive. People to People projects and more than thirty agreements enable contacts between Turkish universities, research institutes, and medical schools. The University of Ankara, the Middle East Technical University, Bilkent, Bogazici, Galatasaray, Bilge, Konya, Antalya, and Kirikkale have been visited by scientists and faculty from all seven Israeli universities and scientific research centres. Hundreds of trainees from both countries have participated in scientific seminars and instruction courses. Violinists, pianists, and other musicians, opera singers, orchestras, ballet and dance groups, perform at each other's festivals. ("Cafe Istanbul" was the name given to the performance of Turkish musicians in Israel in winter 2002.) Turkish and Israeli film weeks, architecture, painting, carpet and photograph exhibitions won much success and acclaim. The Ottoman carpets exhibition in Jerusalem, and the Israeli "Bread" photograph exhibition, drew large crowds. The latter, shown in Istanbul in June 1998, centred on the many symbolic meanings of bread in different cultures. The Turkish Cancer Association displayed photographs of the Israeli model, Ariella Shavid, who had her breasts removed owing to cancer. Shavid went on with her life, without altering her post-surgery appearance, sending a message of courage and pride to other breast cancer patients. Turkish university students who spent their summer in Israeli kibbutz; high-school students from Israel who visit schools in Turkey, lecture and show

videos, and are hosted by Turkish families with children of similar age, have added a great deal to the People to People projects.<sup>97</sup> The result of all this is that broad circles of Israelis and Turks have a direct interest in continued contacts, in enhancing their business, and preventing or minimizing any upheavals between Ankara and Jerusalem. Recalling the aforementioned example from Turkish-Greek relations, politicians and soldiers in both places may be expected to do their utmost to prevent the collapse of the bilateral relationship.

However, problems do arise. Political and religious objections, as well as economic and commercial complaints, intermittently threaten to mar the above described rapprochement. Turkish employees in Israel experience poor working conditions, their passports are kept by their employers, and companies usually do not pay their full wages to discourage them from leaving for better jobs. Those who nevertheless prefer not to stay on, do not see their passports again: the companies, so the rumour says, sell the passports in Istanbul, now stamped with the highly sought-after Israeli work permit visa, to new job seekers. Alternatively, the Turkish embassy in Tel Aviv demands 700 dollars for a new passport.<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, complained the Turkish daily, *Radikal*, "Our workers get into trouble for harassing women." And when the Israeli police imprison foreign workers and detain them (in "concentration camps") till their deportation procedures are finalized, the real reason is revealed: "It is the U.S. who is enforcing this. The U.S. wants Israel to employ Arabs and get on with the peace process so they have asked Israel to send back all foreign workers."<sup>99</sup>

Neither was military cooperation devoid of any friction. The Turkish media differed as to the value of intelligence Turkey gets from Israel. *Sabah* praised the satellite pictures of Syria, which were full of top-secret military information, including indications as to the inferior weapons that country deployed along its border with Turkey. The *Milliyet*, however, complained that contrary to the two countries' intelligence-exchange agreement, Israel avoided supplying Turkey with updated intelligence on Syria. What it did eventually supply Turkey with, was information available to the public, not secret photographs of Syrian troops taken by the Israeli satellite, OFEK-4.<sup>100</sup> Similar complaints were raised in relation to the upgrading of the Turkish F-5 aircraft, which the IAI won the tender for through a proposal "based on shrewdness." The consortium that won the bid appeared to be from Singapore; it turned out at the last moment that the bidder is actually the IAI. Moreover, after the aircraft-modernization agreement was signed, Turkey insisted that the multifunction display that would be fitted in the F-5, would be of the Israeli-made Elbit type, and identical to the avionics that exists in the Israeli F-16 jet fighters. This was to cut down the duration of training because Turkish pilots, before moving to the advanced F-16, had first to prove themselves on the F-5. The IAI refused and insisted on inferior systems being installed in the F-5, demanding instead higher payment for the Elbit product. In the same bid the Turkish aircraft industry had increased the number of locally made systems, for instance the VHF/UHF radio systems fitted in the F-5. Still, complained the *Cumhuriyet*, although the IAI was asked not to calculate

these radio appliances, the final fee to be paid to the Israelis included payment for such systems. On the other hand, Israel complained about the quality of Turkish military export to Israel: a tender won by an Israeli producer for the supply of 5,000 special commando uniforms with bullet-proof vests was passed on to a Turkish company. Alas, it was found to be below the standard – the vests were not resistant to bullet and shrapnel – and the tender was cancelled.<sup>101</sup>

During a visit to Israel of Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz (September 1998), Benjamin Netanyahu greeted his Turkish guest. The following quotation from *Zaman* might be a good example of the various aspects that are interwoven in the bilateral relations. It binds together Turkey's sensitivity in relation to its Ottoman pride with its hectic secular-religious present; the uncertainties, terror and violence that the city of Jerusalem is coping with; and Israeli sensitivity to the Holocaust:

Netanyahu must have advisors who know Turkey very well, [so] he spared his best words for Ataturk. Among all the niceties about Ataturk, his words, which should have offended us, went unnoticed. These words were about the situation in Jerusalem at the beginning of the century: "Apart from the wall built by Suleiman the Magnificent, Jerusalem was in a pitiful state, with arid land," said Netanyahu. Maybe that was the case but in those days Jerusalem was in the hands of the Turks and it had not become the scene of terror yet. At least its status was not under discussion. Everyone who visits Israel is taken to *Yad Vashem*. I had different feelings while going around in the museum this time. I spent a long time in front of one picture. The picture was of a group of judges and underneath it said, "This is the photo of judges supporting the Nazi regime." I felt like crying while reading this. We must start collecting material for a future museum to commemorate the oppressed people of 28 February. [On 28 February 1997 the Turkish military presented Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan with a list of demands. This ultimatum eventually brought Erbakan's resignation. See Chapter 4].<sup>102</sup>

If still needed, this quotation is yet further evidence of the close contact between internal and external affairs that the bilateral Turkish–Israeli rapprochement raises.

### **Opposing forces: Arab and Muslim reactions**

It would be an understatement to argue that Israeli–Turkish relationship is not popular in the Arab world. Apparently, the parallels are obvious: the Arabs have lost Palestine and Alexandretta, and blame for those setbacks falls upon Israel and Turkey, respectively. The Arab world and Iran pursue continuous campaigns against both countries, albeit "on the back burner" and by means of surrogates: Syria assails Turkey by means of the PKK underground, and Israel by means of the Lebanese Hizbullah. Israel's security zone in southern Lebanon (evacuated in May 2000) and its Turkish parallel in northern Iraq, are – in the Arab view – outright additional conquests. (Privately, Turkish officials disliked

the Israeli withdrawal from the Lebanon: it undermines our presence in northern Iraq, they said.) A harshly violent historical legacy – also colonial in Turkey’s case – leaves its mark on the Arab world’s relations with Turkey and Israel. Most Arabs regard both countries as an affliction, a Middle Eastern subsidiary of the ugly and secular sides of Western civilization. The two together form a Western thrust – also of military features because of Turkey’s membership in NATO – into the core of the Muslim and Arab world. The Turkish case also poses a cultural threat: Ankara could be presented as a model of a democratic and secular state for Arab and Muslim countries to emulate, and to serve as a bridge between East and West.<sup>103</sup> The Arab response, therefore, reflects bitterness, emotions, phobia, anxiety, etc. See, for instance, Arab accusations, repeated in Turkish newspapers, that when crossing Turkish territory, Israeli agents placed crocodile eggs in Iraqi lakes.

The Arab reaction included, *inter alia*, displays of alienation toward, and denial of legitimacy of, the Turkish–Israeli cooperation, and calls for the establishment of counter-steps and coalitions. However, verbal reactions were the most the Arab world afforded vis-à-vis this bilateral cooperation. (Interestingly, the Hellenic world or the Kurds acted in a similar way: there was only one single violent Kurdish reaction – the raid in February 1999 on the Israeli consulate in Berlin following the capture of Abdullah Ocalan.) Syria and Iraq, supposedly the countries most negatively affected – Syria by the pincer-like grip and Iraq by the Turkish security zone in its territory – took care not to antagonize mighty Turkey. Baghdad was doubly cautious because Turkey and Jordan (another party, albeit a junior one, to the Turkish–Israeli cooperation), are Iraq’s only export exits. However, Turkey was excluded from the role of hosting or facilitating in any way the 1990s peace talks between the Arabs and Israelis. The Arab partners concerned were totally opposed to granting Turkey such a role because they did not want to strengthen its standing in the region, especially because of Ankara’s links to Jerusalem.<sup>104</sup>

The term “perfidy” is commonly bandied about between Turkey and the Arab world. Such was Arab aid to Britain in its war against the Ottoman Empire; Egypt’s assistance to the Greek Cypriots in their war against the Turkish Cypriots; Turkey’s recognition of the state of Israel; and Turkey’s steady, principled support for the continued presence of the Western powers in the Middle East and North Africa, in direct opposition to Arab nationalism. The following figures illustrate the “chill” between Ankara and its mid-eastern neighbours: 1982 marked a zenith in trade relations between Turkey and the Arab world; 44 percent of Turkey’s exports, and 29 percent of its imports, were with trading partners from the Arab Middle East. A steady decline has reduced these figures to a low: by 1996, they had fallen to 11 and 8 percent, respectively.<sup>105</sup>

Matters were not always in such a wretched state. The Muslim common denominator was brought to the fore, in particular during the prime ministership of Necmettin Erbakan, as a means to strengthen the Arab–Turkish bond at the expense of the Turkish–Israeli one. As mentioned previously, no deterioration



was recorded in the bilateral relations during the short-term government of Erbakan. Also, raising the Muslim common nexus was greeted with little enthusiasm by the secular and military elite of Turkey.

It is interesting to note the remedy proposed by Khaled bin Sutlan bin Abed al-Aziz, a scion of the Saudi royal family, son of the Saudi Defense Minister, and proprietor and publisher of the *Al-Hiyat* newspaper. Thriving economic interactions – the basis for the intensive Turkish–Israeli cooperation – is also the recipe for bettering Arab–Turkish relations. After a doleful description of the grave consequences of the Israeli–Turkish alliance, the writer poses the following question and answer: “How then can we prevent Turkey’s dissociation from its links of friendship and support with the Arabs? Solely by granting supreme importance to mutual economic interests. It is vital to find a form of economic integration between the Arabs and Turks, even if it is a gradual process.”<sup>106</sup>

Before their very eyes, the Arabs witnessed the emergence – free of the inhibitions and constraints of the cold war – of a renewed “Baghdad Pact” which, since the 1950s, bears the infamous connotation of an anti-Arab means, with Turkey acting in contrast to Arab national aspirations. The unleashed regional powers, be they Turkey or Israel, are much more dangerous because this time they are not curbed by the Soviet Union. The two were portrayed as a living proof of the Arab collective weakness, if not as an existential nightmare. The 1990s version of the new Baghdad Pact is composed of Turkey and Israel, but as in the past is serving Western colonial aspirations and is viewed as offering threats. It brandishes the water weapon, very clearly spelled out by Ofra Bengio and Gencer Ozcan: “Put bluntly, the fear was that the Arab ‘oil weapon’ would be ‘overwhelmed’ by the Turkish ‘water weapon.’”<sup>107</sup> It possesses military technology, Israeli nuclear monopoly, industry, territory, a large population, and controls regions and areas thick with crossroads of unrivalled importance. Revival of Ottoman hegemonic dreams and renewed subjugation of the Arab peoples were not excluded. Reactions and proclamations were swift: “The Turko–Israeli treaty – the most perilous milestone in the Middle East since the First World War . . . comprises the ambition to draw a political and economic map based on water, by means of the Israeli–Turkish gun and with United States backing.”<sup>108</sup>

An Egyptian newspaper contrived to list the detrimental effects an Israeli–Arab peace would exert upon Turkey – suggesting that Turkey favoured continuation of the Middle East conflict. The Kurds, said the newspaper, would envy and copy the Palestinians. Syria, relieved of its front with Israel, would concentrate on its dispute with Turkey. Opposition by Iran and various Muslim movements to the peace process would sharpen differences and provoke clashes and conflicts within Turkey, already wrought with religious–secular standoffs. Turkey would come under growing pressure over Cyprus. The revival of Beirut and Haifa as business centres of considerable weight in the regional economy will enable those cities to replace Istanbul, the principal beneficiary from the devastation of Beirut. And so on.<sup>109</sup>

In addition to these, Arab sources watch, some would say with horror, how Turkey focuses again on the Middle East. They list Turkish reluctance to get entangled in the ethnic complexities of Central Asia, or confront the traditional influence of Russia, successor of the Soviet Union, as the power with a decisive say in that region. Here one can repeat Moscow's warning to Turkey against being carried away by Pan-Turkish fantasies, lest Russia would respond with Pan-Slavism, targeting Turkish and Turkic ethnic elements and Muslim concentrations.<sup>110</sup> The Arabs are aware that Turkey's alienation from Europe causes it to divert its attention also to the Middle East, and accordingly to collaboration with Israel. "Turkey realised that while becoming westernised she has to establish relations in the Middle East as well. She thought Israel was the most suitable country to develop relations with."<sup>111</sup> Yet, there was another factor that brought about the rapprochement between Turkey and Israel. Here is another disenchanted country as far as enjoying European sympathies:

The hatred against Jews is based upon religion, and against Turks on the many years of fear. While they [the Europeans] always remember when they cross themselves that the Jew crucified Jesus, most have made it a habit to scare their children with the threat: 'Be good, or else I will give you to the Turks'. Hatred has become second nature to the Europeans.<sup>112</sup>

That is to say, the need to balance European and Russian reservation, as well as hostile Greek and Armenian lobbies, even a critical American Congress, direct Turkey toward Israel, and back into the Middle East.

Turkey's prime objective seemed to be Syria and Iraq, not Tehran. An assault on the first, as part of the conflict between the two, would be less costly than an attack on Iran. (The same thinking is applied as regards Turkey's Jews. Arab sources preferred to blame the Jewish community there for forging the Israeli-Turkish alliance; it is evidently easier to accuse the Jewish community than the Turkish government.)<sup>113</sup> Hence, if Ankara is not restrained, additional Arab territory – such as Mosul in northern Iraq – could fall into Turkish hands, in addition to the plights that have already befallen Syrian Alexandretta and the Golan Heights.<sup>114</sup> Thus, Arab fears of Turkey predated the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement. The latter, however, has added further fuel to the flames. It is an open account, warn Arab sources, still to be settled, not necessarily in Arab favour.

In view of the above, we should note the diagnosis – and remedy – proposed by the aforementioned scion of the Saudi royalty. Arabs have every right to be concerned, but they should ask themselves what brought about their break with Ankara, and how they should respond?

On the whole, Arab politics are wanting in the capacity for coping with rapid changes on the ground. Arab politicians wake up to discover that the situation has changed. The Arabs assumed that Eritrea would remain a loyal friend even after gaining its independence; they also assumed that Turkey would be on their side forever, even if it gained no benefit thereby.

The Arab side did not comprehend the complexities of the internal situation in Turkey, or that country's regional and international considerations. This created a climate that could push Turkey even further into the camp of unfriendly countries.<sup>115</sup>

We have already specified the economic remedy proposed for healing Turkish–Arab relations. Interestingly, this remedy coincides with the thrust of this chapter, namely that flourishing economic ties are the nearest to a guarantee of good relations – as illustrated by Israeli–Turkish relations and, conversely, in their absence – in Turkish–Greek and Turkish–Arab relations. Second in rank are proposals for Turkish–Arab cultural collaboration: according to al-Aziz it is vital that Arabs and Turks start purging history books and textbooks of mutual insults.<sup>116</sup> A good omen is Syria's readiness to alter the curriculum of Syrian schools so that the 500 years of Ottoman rule should not be regarded anymore as imperialism responsible for the Arabs' "worst tragedy," backwardness, and weakness. Conversely, Turkish texts still carry the negative image of the Arab as a bedouin, traitor, womanizer, uneducated and submissive.<sup>117</sup> Al-Aziz also advocates military cooperation between Turkey, Pakistan and the Gulf states:

I do not propose that we in the Gulf purchase military services from other countries. On the contrary, it is a matter of recognition and consolidation of shared interests. As those countries could serve to defend us, we too, in the Arabian Peninsula, can enhance their strategic depth. We are important to them no less than they are important to us.<sup>118</sup>

Ostensibly, the Israeli–Turkish rapprochement has generated new alliances in the Arab world. It is still premature to assess their vitality, value or capacity for survival, and we will thus restrict the discussion to a mention of developments. One matter currently under discussion is an Egyptian–Iranian rapprochement. Meetings at senior levels – the first for decades – were held in Tehran and Cairo. The December 1997 Islamic Conference convened in Tehran offered a convenient forum for these discussions. However, further improvement of bilateral relations seems to be impeded by Cairo's apprehensions regarding Iran's role in Muslim terrorism in Egypt and North Africa.

Syria and Iran recently signed a series of agreements on boosting bilateral trade. At their conclusion, the sides voiced concern over Turkey's links with Israel, and discussed further expansion of their own relations in view of those links. Syrian–Iraqi relations have displayed an unexpected spurt recently, likewise explained by fear of the Israeli–Turkish alliance. Thousands of Syrian merchants were granted Iraqi entry visas to sell goods sanctioned for sale under the UN embargo on Iraq. Baghdad has also called off its anti-Syrian propaganda broadcasts from the "Voice of Arab Syria" (the station launched its broadcasts in the 1970s; Damascus is persisting in its counter-propaganda broadcast from the "Voice of Iraq," though the tone is now less hostile). Telephone links between Syria and Iraq have been renewed. Here, too, the ties are nascent, or, to be precise, the first after a two-decade rift; they are not marked by concrete political expressions but with Syrian concern lest it be tarnished by association with a "leper state" like Iraq.<sup>119</sup>

Joint exercises by anti-aircraft defense units from Russia and Syria were held at a Russian site in late September 1997. The units drilled with Russian S-200 surface-to-air missiles, designed for use against high-altitude planes. The exercises were defended as a response to the joint maritime exercises held by Turkey, Israel and the United States ("Reliant Mermaid").<sup>120</sup> Iran likewise explains the expansion of its army with the necessity of defending itself against what it terms "the Israeli-Turkish conspiracy."

In spite of the above, the harsh terms did not impede renewed normalization of relations between Ankara and Tehran. In November 1997, each of the two countries restored its ambassador to the other's capital, and renewed bilateral military consultations, as well as deliberations on subjects like terrorism, energy and trade. The contention put forward by Philip Robins, concerning Ankara's considerations in its policy vis-à-vis Iran, probably holds equally for Tehran's position towards Turkey. Robins suggests that Turkey does not have the luxury of geographical distance from Iran, and it therefore seeks ways of reaching an understanding with Tehran, albeit maintaining a critical approach towards Iran. The same could be argued in the reverse direction.<sup>121</sup>

Hitherto, the Arab and Islamic response to Israeli-Turkish relations features much talk but very little action. Counter-alliances have yet to emerge, and it is doubtful whether they will; the causes of the existing rifts within the Islamic and Arab Middle East still await removal, leaving opponents of the Israeli-Turkish rapprochement very frustrated and with few opportunities for action. Moreover, following the initial waves of wrath and anger, Turkish-Arab contacts seem to experience an upsurge. We have already mentioned the growing volume of Syrian-Turkish relations (see Chapter 4). Egypt, which in 1997 toyed with the idea of a Greek-Egyptian accord to counter-balance the Turkish-Israeli one has concluded (June 2001) a multibillion cubic meter gas deal with Turkey, a multibillion dollar buyer of Egyptian energy. The pipeline will run from the Egyptian town of Al-Arish to Ceyhan. Surprisingly, following Turkish insistence, a branch will connect it to the Israeli town of Ashkelon. Conversely, Ankara turned down the Egyptian plan to include Syria and Lebanon in the deal. Iran, a major gas supplier to Turkey did not like the Egyptian concurrence, but eventually blamed Turkey and Egypt for sacrificing their interests in favour of the Zionist and American ones.<sup>122</sup>

It seems that Iraqi dependency on water from Turkish sources leaves little scope for anti-Turkish démarches, and epitomizes the general Arab reaction depicted above. When the other side fires off remarks like "They have oil, we have water – let them drink their oil", anti-Turkish initiatives have to be cautious, and in fact are hollow.

## Epilogue

The end of the decade was marked by a tragic event in Turkey – the earthquake of August 1999. A huge Israeli machine of help was set in motion and started yet

another stage in Turkish–Israeli relations. The epitome of this diplomacy is the “Israel–Turkey Village” (called “Israil Koy” by its inhabitants) in Adapazari, which stood in the epicentre of the quake. It consists of 320 houses plus community buildings (shops, school, police station, playground, and clinic). The village serves as a model for the restoration of the town and other earthquake-stricken people. A “We Won’t Forget You” sign, plus the Turkish and the Israeli flags, welcome those arriving in the village. Turkish public opinion – surprisingly, Muslim press included – went out of its way to acclaim the Israeli support, rescue teams, humanitarian help, etc. Inevitably, a comparison was made between the Israeli rally to support Turkey and the help provided by Ankara’s Arab neighbours; the end result was greatly in Israel’s favour. It could be a mere coincidence but the “earthquake diplomacy” of Jerusalem and Athens symbolized a clear improvement in the bilateral relations of Greece and Israel with Turkey. The Turkish–Israeli volume of trade for the year 2000 – civil items only, tourism excluded – has reached, for the first time, the 1 billion dollars, a jump of more than 22 percent; joint military cooperation rocketed by 40 percent in comparison with 1999.

A second issue that is still pending is the possible exportation of Turkish water to Israel, to the volume of 50 million cubic meters annually – 10 percent of Israel’s water shortage and about 2.5 percent of the country’s annual consumption. Ankara insists that water from the Euphrates river will not serve a future peace agreement between Syria and Israel. That is to say, Syrian yielding to Israel water from the Jordan river and the Sea of Galilee could not be met by a Turkish allocation of more water from the Euphrates river to Damascus. The development of the Euphrates basin – the river’s water in particular – is at the center of Turkey’s GAP project. However, Turkey could become the central component in the region if it would irrigate the drought-stricken Middle East. This it could do by selling the water from its rivers that currently empty into the Mediterranean. Various issues are involved in this: Israeli hesitation to be dependent on a foreign supplier as regards an existential commodity like water; Turkey’s eagerness to balance its arms trade with Israel by exporting water to the latter (“water for tank upgrading”); the 150 million dollar specially built terminal at the Manavgat river mouth, 60 km east of the city of Antalya, which empties into the Mediterranean (the terminal that was to serve the tankers that would load the river’s water stands idle, waiting for its Middle Eastern buyers); the competition with the plunging prices of water desalination (50 cents per cubic meter, less than half the price of imported Turkish water); the pressures emanating from the Israeli military, Israel’s arms industry, the IAI and the Foreign Office, who strongly support a water deal with Turkey, even if it is economically more expensive than other water production options; and so on. In July 2002 the water deal was not yet been finalized, a fact that threatened to mar the bilateral relations. The low cost of desalinated seawater from the projects that Israel has initiated in 2001 (due to be operational by 2004), and the controversy over the transportation of the water – 50 cent for a cubic meter – brought the negotiations to a standstill. Ankara wants

the buyer to pay for the transportation – transportation thus becoming another Turkish export item to Israel – in addition to water. Israel wants the supplier to cover transportation and to halve the cost of the water at the Manavgat terminal, currently standing at 12–18 cents a cubic meter. A surprising Israeli offer – to pay Turkey a one-off compensation of 150 million dollars, equal to the cost of the Manavgat terminal, and to buy itself out from the whole deal, raised angry reactions in Turkey. “We are not in favor of ‘baksheesh’” commented the Turkish negotiators.<sup>123</sup>

The third event, this time with more detrimental effects – though it seems that both sides do their utmost to limit the damage – are the repercussions of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict on the above described relations. Presumably it is not very comfortable to be defined as a friend of Israel when so much criticism is directed against it. Indeed, in the Arab world Turkey was labelled as a party to the axis of evil, together with the United States and Israel. Implications were not slow in coming: no less a person than Bulent Ecevit, the Turkish Prime Minister, defined Israel as committing genocide against the Palestinians, and the newspaper *Safak* talked of “Adolf Sharon.” Demonstrations were held against the Israeli football star, Haim Revivo, of Fenerbahce, with banners saying (in English), “Revivo Go Home.” Public opinion polls taken at the height of the Palestinian uprising in the summer of 2001 showed that 81 percent of the Turks see Israel as their fourth biggest enemy after Armenia, the Republic of Cyprus, and Greece. Alternatively, others differentiated between “Sharon and his government” and the Israeli people: “governments come and go, but the real friendship of the people stays.” And in the *Hurriyet* more positive voices talked about the help Israel handed to Turkey following the earthquake of 1999 and in capturing Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK leader. “Have ever the Palestinians handed us such help?” asked the newspaper. Scheduled visits and joint military exercises were initially postponed but later held as planned, and Ariel Sharon paid a visit to Ecevit in August 2001. No contract was cancelled. On the contrary, a 668 million dollar tender was given in March 2002 to the Israeli military industries to upgrade 170 US-made M-60 A-1 Turkish tanks. Neither did the remark of Ecevit go unnoticed, surprisingly in Turkey itself: “people who live in glass houses should not throw stones,” was the reaction of Mehmet Ali Birand, a well-known publicist.<sup>124</sup>

### Summary: “a drama over a drama”

Motivated by Kemalist eagerness to overcome – perhaps even to disregard – the geopolitics of the Middle East in which it is located, Turkey spent many years knocking on Western doors, while simultaneously persisting in the refusal to take sides in regional conflicts, whether between Israelis and Arabs, or any other standoff. That is, seemingly, a thing of the past: the 1991 Gulf War was a watershed, marking the renewal of Turkey’s involvement – a very cautious one, but very circumspect – henceforth in the Middle East. Turkey’s relations with Israel,

and the inevitably pro-Israel position that that relationship projects – whether it is so in fact, or merely interpreted as such by the various players – offer a further expression of Turkey's growing involvement in the Middle East. This renewed interest in the Middle East, and Turkey's repeated rejection and attraction by the West and Europe (culminating in the 1997 and 1999 Luxembourg and Helsinki contradictory decisions), provide the context wherein Turkey's interaction with Israel has been molded in recent years. If membership of the Baghdad Pact in the 1950s was a fleeting episode which Ankara swiftly abandoned, the Gulf War and the relationship with Israel indicate that Turkey's involvement with the Middle East has now taken on facets of greater permanence.

Israel and Turkey have been motivated to weave their close ties by mutual interests, some of them existential. The region's two most pro-Western states – whose democratic, and pro-American character and, equally, their usefulness to Western ends, have been placed in doubt since the termination of the cold war – collaborate with each other so as to survive as free societies. With US encouragement, Israel aids Turkey with arms and equipment denied by an indifferent Europe and hostile American public opinion. Turkey's air space, its ports, and other installations are made available to Israel. Israeli training facilities are available to Turkey. Neither Turkey nor Israel expects the other country to fight its wars. It may be just as well: in spite of Turkey's membership of NATO, Ankara has often wondered whether other members of the alliance would hasten to its defence if called upon to do so. The vigour radiated by the links between the two states, and the American support they enjoy – Ankara and Israel welcome even a greater American role in the region – apparently exude a tone of status quo over the region. Revisionist players who plan to upset that status quo might be reluctant to put the alliance to the test.

The economic and civil contacts element underlies the military ties between Turkey and Israel. It renders their interaction more permanent, as a structure whose components have an interest in its survival over time. The middle class and elite in both countries have mutual trade contacts. Many, as a result, have vested interests in their survival and development. Incidentally, while the elite in the Arab world boycott Israel, the Turkish elite is at the forefront of contacts with it. One could therefore safely say that the rapprochement clearly consists of both peoples, not only their governments. If this collaboration possesses strategic dimensions, it is precisely the non-military links between Ankara and Jerusalem that support them. To sustain this, one should bear in mind that, more than between any two Middle Eastern countries, bilateral Turkish–Israeli trade (military and tourism excluded) is the highest in the region. Joint ventures the two countries have initiated in Central Asia, in commercial fields as in production and delivery of energy, development of water sources, development of all kinds of *terra incognita*, etc., all feature a strategic dimension, not necessarily of guns and tanks. On the contrary, the non-military aspects give a wide basis to the relationship, probably projecting longevity. By way of comparison, all other bilateral special relations of Israel (with France, Iran and South Africa) that

failed were principally of one dimension – the military or governmental one – and lacked a wide basis.

The culmination of any political relationship is a mutual exposure to the culture and society of the people behind it. One can safely conclude that Turks and Israelis are on the right path toward this kind of exposure. “A drama over a drama,” is the definition given by Alon Liel, the Israeli Chargé d’Affairs in Ankara in the early 1980s, to the current Turkish–Israeli economic, political, military, cultural and social rapprochement. Dr Liel’s impressions should be taken seriously: in the early 1980s, when Turkey downgraded its relations with Israel, it enabled merely a representation of junior diplomats. Liel was then the junior Israeli representative in Ankara. When it comes to evaluating the current rapprochement, “a drama over a drama” is the right definition for the comparison between the 1980s and the 1990s and the early years of the twenty-first century.

## Notes

- 1 David Ben Gurion complained of Turkey’s refusal to acknowledge its ties with Israel, comparing it to the way a man relates to his mistress. Quoted in Amikam Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece: Uneasy Relations in the East Mediterranean*, London, Frank Cass, 1987, p. 75.
- 2 Uri Gordon, “Israel–Turkey Relations: From Legation to Embassy,” *Israel Turkey Trade*, Tel-Aviv, a publication of the Israel Turkey Business Council, No. 6, 2000.
- 3 See Engin Erdem, *Bibliography on Turkish–Israeli Relations*, 16 January 2002, <http://tsi.idc.ac.il/Bibliography.html>; Ofra Bengio and Gencer Ozcan, “Old Grievances, New Fears: Arab Perceptions of Turkey and its Alignment with Israel,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, April 2001, p. 69. See also Raphael Israeli, “The Turkish–Israeli Odd Couple,” *Orbis*, Vol. 45, No. 1, Winter 2001, pp. 65–79; William Safire, *New York Times*, reprinted in *Ha’aretz*, 7 February 1999; Amnon Barzilai, *Ha’aretz*, 4 July 2001; Anat Lewin, “Turkey and Israel: Reciprocal and Mutual Imagery in the Media, 1994–1999,” *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Autumn 2000, p. 240.
- 4 *Sabah*, 7 September 1998.
- 5 Peres to Hikmet Cetin, Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, *Yeni Yuzyil*, 10 March 1999. For the “sandwich” view see Ergun Balci, *Cumhuriyet*, 3 November 1998; *Al-Quds*, 8 September 1998; *Hurriyet*, 9 September 1998; *Zaman*, 10 September 1998.
- 6 Alon Liel, *Ha’aretz*, 22 December 1997. See also the comments of Zeev Schiff, one of Israel’s leading military commentators: “The impression nowadays is that imprudent P.R. sometimes motivates Israeli-Turkish relations . . . There is talk of the necessity of preserving confidentiality, but everything is swiftly leaked. And the media cannot be held to blame. It’s not so much the media calves that want to suck, as the establishment cow wants to give suckle with scoops about the Israeli–Turkish flirtation. It happens in both camps.” *Ha’aretz*, 2 January 1998.
- 7 *Washington Post*, 23 December 1997.
- 8 Maurice Fisher, Israeli Legation, Ankara, to Foreign Ministry, 19 January 1954. Quoted in Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece*, pp. 62–63. During the 1950s, Solel-Boneh – one of Israel’s largest construction corporations – built airfields in Turkey.
- 9 *Aksiyon Magazine*, 18–24 May 1996. The agreement is signed by General Cevik Bir, the Turkish Deputy Chief-of-Staff, and David Ivry, the General Director of the Israeli Defense Ministry.



- 10 *Ha'aretz*, 27 May 1997.
- 11 *Ha'aretz*, 26 May 1996.
- 12 On the Israeli support to the Kurdish struggle see, Shlomo Nakdimon, *A Hopeless Hope: The Rise and Fall of the Israeli Kurdish Alliance, 1963–1975*. Tel Aviv, Miskal–Yediot Ahronot Books and Chemed Books, 1996; *Milliyet*, 18 March 1999.
- 13 Ergun Balci, *Cumhuriyet*, 3 November 1998; interviews, Ankara, February–June 1999; M. Necati Ozfatura, *Turkiye*, 9 October 1998; Mensur Akgun, *Yeni Yuzyil*, 11 October 1998.
- 14 *Ha'aretz*, 12 April 1996.
- 15 *Ha'aretz*, 8 December 1997.
- 16 *Yediot Ahronot*, 7 January 1997.
- 17 *Ha'aretz*, 19 October 1997.
- 18 *Ha'aretz*, 20 January 1998.
- 19 Athens News Agency, *DNB*, 14 November 1996; “Greece’s Armed Forces Modernize,” *COSMOS*, Athens Institute of International Affairs, Panteion University, Vol. 2, No. 1, May–June 1997. The Greek media mentioned Israel as a possible supplier of the following arms: 250 new tanks valued at 400 million dollars; anti-aircraft missiles – 300 million; unmanned aircraft (drones) – 20 million; early warning aircraft – 500 million; communications equipment – 8 million; and three missile boats. See *Ha'aretz*, 5 October 1997.
- 20 *Ha'aretz*, 29 January 1997; 5 and 27 October 1997; *DNB*, 21 October 1996.
- 21 Sema Emiroglu, quoting Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem, *Milliyet*, 17 September 1998.
- 22 Ceyda Karan, *Radikal*, 28 December 1998. The Palestinian *PEN Club* invited Karan to visit the Palestinian Authority and Israel, and she authored a series of articles entitled, “Palestine on the Way to Independence.”
- 23 Mehmet Dikbayir, “Cold Shower to the Arabs,” *Turkiye*, 5 May 1999.
- 24 Ceyda Karan, *Radikal*, 28 December 1998.
- 25 Faruk Caliskan, *Radikal*, 21 June 1998.
- 26 Ceyda Karan, *Radikal*, 29 December 1998.
- 27 *Ha'aretz*, 30 September 1997.
- 28 *Ha'aretz*, 23 November 2000.
- 29 *Cumhuriyet*, 5 November 1994.
- 30 Guneri Civaoglu, “Unsuccessful Arafatization,” *Milliyet*, 3 December 1998.
- 31 Ali Bulac, *Zaman*, 14 January 1999.
- 32 *Akit*, 21 September 1997.
- 33 *Sabah*, 24 September 1997.
- 34 Nazif Okumus, *Yeni Gunaydin*, 18 September 1997.
- 35 *Ha'aretz*, 28 and 31 August 1997.
- 36 *Yediot Ahronot*, 12 May 2000; *Sabah*, 11 May 2000.
- 37 Lili Galili, *Ha'aretz*, 25 April 2000.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 Tom Segev, *Ha'aretz*, 28 April 2000.
- 40 *Ha'aretz*, editorial, 27 April 2000.
- 41 Guntay Simsek, *Zaman*, 18 June 1998.
- 42 Selin Caglayan has written for *Yeni Yuzyil*; Abdulkерim Balci for *Zaman*; Vahap Yazaroglu for *Milliyet*.
- 43 *Yeni Yuzyil*, 7 June 1999; *Hurriyet*, 27 February 1999; *Turkiye*, 8 June 1999; *Sabah*, 1 June 1998; *Hurriyet*, 17 June 1998; *Radikal*, 17 June 1999; *Milliyet*, 6 January 1999; *Milliyet*, 18 March 1999; *Yeni Yuzyil*, 14 August 1998; *Milliyet*, 18 August 1998; *Zaman*, 1 August 1998.
- 44 Guntay Simsek, *Zaman*, 22 June 1998; Aydin Engin, *Cumhuriyet*, 8–10 January 1999.

- 45 Guntay Simsek, *Zaman*, 22 June 1998.
- 46 Faruk Caliskan, *Radikal*, 21 June 1998; *Milliyet*, 7 June 1998.
- 47 Aydin Engin, *Cumhuriyet*, 8–10 January 1999.
- 48 Taha Kivanc (alias Fehmi Koru), *Zaman*, 9 September 1998. Kivanc was in a group of journalists who followed Prime Minister Yilmaz on his visit to Jordan and Israel.
- 49 Israel Harel, *Ha'aretz*, 29 November 1998; Steff Wertheimer, *Ha'aretz*, 12 February 1999; Yigal Tomarkin, *Ha'aretz*, 1 June 1999. Note the titles of the articles: "Talk to Him in Turkish," "Aren't There Anymore Civilians in this Country," "Turkey, for Example," respectively. See also *Ha'aretz*, 3 November 2000.
- 50 Israel Goodovitch, Chairperson, The Israeli Association of Architects and City Engineers, *Ha'aretz*, 30 May 2001.
- 51 Ilhan Selcuk, *Cumhuriyet*, 10 July 1997. Emphasis added. See also Mehmet Ali Kisalali, *Turkiye*, 7 June 1998, interview with Professor Hasan Koni.
- 52 *Ha'aretz*, 30 September 1997.
- 53 See, for instance, Fikret Ertan, *Zaman*, 17 January 1999; *Sabah*, 18 January 1999.
- 54 *Sabah*, Zeynep Gogus, 20 February 1999; *Turkiye*, Vakur Kaya, 22 February 1999.
- 55 Barry Jacobs, Assistant Director, Office of Government and International Affairs, the American Jewish Committee, "The Role of the American Jewish Committee in Fostering Relations and as a Friend of Turkey," lecture, Istanbul, the Marmara Hotel, 9–10 June 1999; *TDN*, 29 July 1999; Daniel Mariaschin, Director, the *B'nai B'rith* International Center for Public Policy, interview, *TDN*, 28 July 1999. In November 1998 the Jewish American organizations placed a full-page advertisement in major international newspapers, congratulating Turkey on its seventy-fifth anniversary. It started: "*Congratulations! Mazeltov! Tebrikler!*" See copy in *TDN*, 29 July 1999.
- 56 *Ha'aretz*, 8 December 1997.
- 57 Erdal Guven, *Radikal*, 13 September 1998.
- 58 *Ha'aretz* military commentator Zeev Schiff posed the following question and answer in *Ha'aretz*, 2 January 1998: Why does the Chinese Foreign Minister, during his visit to Cairo, permit himself to bypass Israel and criticize the Israeli-Turkish-American naval exercise to be held next week? What is the difference between this minor exercise – dealing with search and rescue – and the [joint] manoeuvres of the Egyptian and Saudi navies, or the manoeuvres the Egyptian army holds with American forces? [China has numerous confidential deals with Israel, but] one gets the impression that, whenever it touches upon Israel, states permit themselves to say things they hesitated to voice before Netanyahu's elevation to office. The ties between Israel and Turkey are an illustration thereof.
- 59 Philip Robins notes that the agreements for military cooperation between Israel and Turkey were signed when there was no government in Turkey, i.e. during the transition between the December 1995 elections and the formation of the new government in 1996. See Philip Robins, "Turkish Foreign Policy under Erbakan," *Survival*, Vol. 39, No. 2, Summer 1997, p. 83.
- 60 With the aim of containing the Islamic religious trend in the Turkish school system, the army chiefs instructed Erbakan to close the religious Imam Hatip Lycees, in existence in Turkey since 1951, and extend compulsory education from five to eight years (even without the legal extension, most of the 15 million students attending state schools stay on for eight years). On terminating the five years' study prescribed by the compulsory education law, 500,000 pupils resume their studies at some 600 religious schools for an additional three- to seven-year period. The religious schools were founded originally for the purpose of training imams for the mosques, but the current numbers of graduates exceed the needs of the country's religious establishment. Each year, diplomas qualifying them as religious preachers are issued to 53,000 graduates, though only 2,300 are required. The following figures relate to the Imam Hatip Lycees and their students (it is

- interesting to note that Erbakan's term of office was the only period with no increase in the number of schools): 1951, 7 schools; 1975, less than 150,000 pupils; 1992, 389 schools; 1995, 479,000 pupils at 448 schools; 1996, 493,000 pupils at 561 schools. See *The Economist*, reprinted in *Ha'aretz*, 19 December 1996; *Ha'aretz*, 29 April 1997, 17 and 20 August 1997; *Time*, 12 January 1998.
- 61 See also Daniel Pipes, "The Birth of a New Middle East Alliance. Turkey and Israel's Brilliant Joint Move," *Washington Times*, 5 January 1998. In December 1996, Sincan mayor, Bekir Yildiz, proclaimed a municipal ban on the sale of turkeys for the upcoming New Year celebrations. New Year, Yildiz declared, is a Christian festivity, and Turks should not mark it by eating turkey; furthermore, just as markets were barred from selling sheep for slaughter for the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice, sales of turkeys would likewise be banned. See *DNB*, 23 December 1996.
- 62 *Ha'aretz*, 19 May 1996; 30 September 1997.
- 63 *Yeni Safak*, 12 May 1997.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 13 May 1997; *Milliyet*, 10 September 1998; *Cumhuriyet*, 17 December 1998; M. Necati Ozfatura, *Turkiye*, 17 December 1998; M. Necati Ozfatura, *Turkiye*, 27 May 1999; Muhsin Eminzadegh, Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, interviewed by Selcuk Gultasli and Kemal Ilter, *Zaman*, 6 February 1999.
- 65 *Milli Gazete*, 14 May 1997.
- 66 *Yeni Safak*, 14 May 1997.
- 67 *Akit*, 14 May 1997.
- 68 *Yeni Safak*, 12 May 1997; M. Necati Ozfatura, *Turkiye*, 27 April 1999.
- 69 Aydin Menderes, *Yeni Safak*, 12 May 1997. Aydin's father, Adnan Menderes, was Turkey's Prime Minister, 1950–60. He was toppled in the 1960 military coup, charged with corruption, and executed by hanging in 1961.
- 70 Aydin Menderes, *Yeni Safak*, 8 May 1997.
- 71 *Sabah*, 1 November 1995.
- 72 *Ha'aretz*, 30 September 1997; George E. Gruen, "Turkish–Israeli Relations: Crisis or Continued Cooperation," *Jerusalem Letter*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, No. 338, 13 July 1996.
- 73 *Yeni Safak*, 8 May 1997.
- 74 *Yediot Ahronot*, 30 September 1997.
- 75 *Yeni Gunaydin*, 18 September 1997.
- 76 *Ha'aretz*, 20 November 1996.
- 77 See a call for a Marshall Plan to add the "sane" countries – Turkey, Jordan, Israel, *Ha'aretz*, 8 April 2002.
- 78 *Yediot Ahronot*, 18 October 1996.
- 79 Jordan, a silent partner to some of the Turkish–Israeli strategic interaction, expressed its wish to increase its share in this cooperation. Amman is reluctant to be a "spare tyre" for these bilateral relations wrote *Sabah*, 4 September 1998. See also *Ha'aretz*, 18 April 2000; *Turkish Probe*, a weekly publication of the *TDN*, 14 February 1999; *TDN*, 16 April 1999; Efraim Inbar, *The Israeli–Turkish Entente*, London, King's College Mediterranean Studies, 2001, pp. 57–59 .
- 80 *Ha'aretz*, 28 April 2000.
- 81 The Turks are to pay Israel 5 percent interest on the plane modernization, whereas contracts with other parties prescribe interest payments of 30 percent – ostensibly because of the high risk of default. During the first two years of the project, the company carrying out the upgrading is to get paid by the Israeli government in the form of a loan from Israel's finance ministry to its Turkish counterpart. Modernization of the F-4s is to cost some 800 million dollars. Modernization of the F-5s costs 75 million. Work on modernization will take two to three years. See *Ha'aretz*, 9 August 1996; *Ha'aretz*, 8 December 1996; *Ha'aretz*, 1 January 1998; *Cumhuriyet*, 31 July 1996.

- 82 *Yeni Safak*, 3 September; *Yeni Safak*, 10 December 1996; *Ha'aretz*, 7 April 1996; *Ha'aretz*, 9 August 1996; *Ha'aretz*, 9 November 2001.
- 83 A seemingly precise text of the agreement appeared in the Turkish *Aksiyon Magazine*, 18–24 May 1996. The agreement was initially made public in the winter of 1996, though various drafts of it had been signed as early as March 1994, as the *Aksiyon* publication revealed.
- 84 *Ha'aretz*, 17 April 1996; 1 January 1998; 3 June 2001; *Jerusalem Post*, 11 February 2002. An irony is linked to the 1990s Israeli airforce overt presence in Turkey: On 6 September 1980, Necmettin Erbakan's National Salvation Party organized in Konya the Jerusalem Liberation Day Rally. Many observers believe that the event was the final incident that prompted the Turkish military to seize power and perform the *coup d'état* of 12 September 1980. In the rally, the demonstrators called for the restoration of the Caliphate, refused to sing the Turkish national anthem, carried anti-Semitic signs and burned the Israeli, American and Russian flags – flags of “Two Great Satans and one Little Satan.” Less than a week later, the military seized power, abolished the existing parties and arrested Erbakan and other leaders. See George E. Gruen, “Defining Limits on Religious Expression in Public Institutions: The Turkish Dilemma,” paper prepared for the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs Summer workshop, 1998, pp. 23–24.
- 85 *Ha'aretz*, 3 and 6 June 2001.
- 86 *Ha'aretz*, 15 and 19 October 1997; 8 December 1997; 2 January 1998; 10 May 1999; 31 July 2001; *TDN* quoted in *Ha'aretz*, 13 May 1997. According to *TDN*, Turkey and Israel would jointly manufacture Popeye missiles to a value of 500 million dollars, by means of Turkey's Mike company, and the Israeli Rafael. The first missiles are to be delivered to Turkey during the coming two and a half years. In the short term, Israel is to deliver Popeye missiles to meet Turkey's urgent needs. It was reported further that the Popeye would also be installed in Turkish F-4s being upgraded in Israel. *Ha'aretz*, 10 May 1999, reported a tough, even ugly, competition among the Ehud system manufacturers. At the end the IAI won the tender.
- 88 *Ha'aretz*, 8 December 1997; 8 January 1998; 28 April 2000; 14 August 2001; 29 August 2001; Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Entente*, p. 22.
- 89 *Ha'aretz*, 2 May 2001; 16 May 2001; 14 August 2001; 2 April 2002.
- 90 *The Economist*, “Survey Turkey,” 8 June 1996; *TDN*, reprinted in *Ha'aretz*, 17 September 1996; *Ha'aretz*, 10 March 1997; *DNB*, 9 April, 5 August 1996.
- 91 The Israeli Manufacturers' Association sets Israeli civilian exports to Turkey to the value of 600 million dollars annually. This is 15 percent of potential Turkish imports from Israel, estimated to reach 4 billion dollars. See Israeli Manufacturers' Association, Department for Foreign Trade and International Relations, *Considerations in Creating an Israeli-Turkish Free Trade Zone* Tel Aviv, August 1993, Hebrew, pages unnumbered.
- 92 *Zaman*, 31 October 1996.
- 93 *DNB*, 9 December 1996.
- 94 *Ha'aretz*, 30 March 1997; 5 July 1999; 30 November 1999; 28 May 2002; Israeli Manufacturers' Association, *Considerations in Creating an Israeli-Turkish Free Trade Zone*. To cut labour wages the IDF closed its sewing workshops for bullet-proof jackets and moved them to Turkey, *Ha'aretz*, 31 July 2001.
- 95 Israeli Manufacturers' Association, *Considerations in Creating an Israeli-Turkish Free Trade Zone*.
- 96 *Ha'aretz*, 23 June 1997; 24 November 1999 (the figures were given by Israel's Lottery Authority). The number of Turkish tourists visiting Israel is small: 1995, 11,767; 1996, 14,341; 1997, 19,000 (estimated).
- 97 For the cultural exchanges see, *TDN*, *SPECIAL*, 21 April 1999; Guneri Civaoglu, *Milliyet*, 20 December 1998; *Ha'aretz*, 13 February 2002.
- 98 Ayse Ellegard, *Radikal*, 15–18 August 1998.

- 99 *Ibid.*
- 100 "Help from a Friend," *Sabah*, 9 October 1998; Vahap Yazaroglu, *Milliyet*, 9 October 1998. Sukru Kucuksahin, *Hurriyet*, 17 November 1998, report of a speech Prime Minister Yilmaz gave the day before at the ANAP party council. Yilmaz praised the Iraqi Kurdish leader, Barazani, and the Israeli Mossad, for furnishing Turkey with much valuable information pertaining to the whereabouts in Syria of Abdullah Ocalan.
- 101 Lale Sariibrahimoglu, *Cumhuriyet*, 16 December 1998; Vahap Yazaroglu, *Milliyet*, 30 April 1999.
- 102 Taha Kivanc alias Fehmi Koru, *Zaman*, 9 September 1998.
- 103 Bengio and Ozcan, "Old Grievances, New Fears," p. 66.
- 104 Philip Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East*, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs and Pinter Publishers, 1991, pp. 49, 50; Ihsan Gurkan, "Turkish-Israeli Relations and the Middle East Peace Process," *Turkish Review of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 7, 1993, p. 109; *Cumhuriyet*, 27 October 1998; *Hurriyet*, 27 October 1998; Bengio and Ozcan, "Old Grievances, New Fears," p. 66.
- 105 Paul Rivlin, *Israeli-Turkish Economic Relations*, Tel Aviv University, The Dayan Center, 11 December 1997, Table 4.
- 106 *TDN* reprinted in *Ha'aretz*, 4 July 1997.
- 107 Bengio and Ozcan, "Old Grievances, New Fears," p. 63.
- 108 *Al'Qusbou Al'Arabi*, Beirut, weekly, 15 April 1997.
- 109 *Al'Siasa Al'Dowliah*, Cairo, quarterly, July 1997.
- 110 Stephen J. Blank, "The Eastern Question Revived: Russia and Turkey Contend for Eurasia," paper submitted to the conference on Muslim Republics of the Former Soviet Union, Tel Aviv University, 12-14 October 1993, p. 25.
- 111 Major General David Ivry, who negotiated on behalf of Israel the military agreements with Turkey, interview, *Milliyet*, 8-9 November 1998.
- 112 Ilhan Selcuk, *Cumhuriyet*, 23 February 1999.
- 113 Ofra Bengio, Tel Aviv University, The Dayan Center, 11 December 1997.
- 114 *Al'Mshahid Al'Siasi*, London, weekly, 12-18 May 1996; *Al'Watan Al'Arabi*, Paris, weekly, 17 May 1996.
- 115 Khaled bin Sutlan bin Abed al-Aziz, *TDN*, reprinted in *Ha'aretz*, 4 July 1997. His reference to Eritrea's anti-Arab policy relates to that country's conquest of the island of Hanish from Yemen.
- 116 *Ibid.*
- 117 On Arab claims against the Ottomans see Bengio and Ozcan, "Old Grievances, New Fears," pp. 52-54.
- 118 Khaled bin Sutlan bin Abed al-Aziz, *TDN*, reprinted in *Ha'aretz*, 4 July 1997.
- 119 *Ha'aretz*, 28 July 1997.
- 120 *Ha'aretz*, 17 September 1997.
- 121 Robins, "Turkish Foreign Policy under Erbakan," pp. 90-91; *Cumhuriyet*, 23 September 1997.
- 122 *Ha'aretz*, 6 August 2001.
- 123 Baksheesh was rampant in the Ottoman Empire and is roughly equal to bribe.
- 124 *Ha'aretz*, 7 April 2002; *Yediot Ahronot*, 19 April 2002; *Cumhuriyet*, 7 April 2002; Fahmi Howeiidi, *Ashraq al-Awsat*, reprinted in *Mideast Mirror*, 21 August 2001.

## CONCLUSION

When we come to evaluate Turkey's record in the 1990s and the country's prospects for the 2000s there are several "No"s and "If"s that we will mention and elaborate on. In addition, the trend by which Turkey is described in numerous publications during the 1990s necessitates clarification. Since the end of the 1980s new opportunities have indeed been opened for Turkey, new crossroads have emerged, new encounters and contacts created. Seemingly, they project a Turkey that is an emerging multiregional power for the foreseeable future. Definitions of Turkey as the rising "Middle Eastern power," "the Central Asian pivot," the "multi-regional power," or even as the emerging "regional super-power" as *Time* magazine had used (see the Help Wanted "Ad," at the beginning of Chapter 1), are to be found in many publications.<sup>1</sup> We, too, we have used this terminology when we came to describe the country's status, performances and prospects. However, a clear warning should be attached to these definitions. Turkey will *not* be the said power *if* it means clashes and confrontations and wars, be it with Russia, Iran, Muslim radicalism, excessive Arab nationalism, ethnic forces, etc. It is hard to recall a power that occasionally does not need to resort to forceful means and weapons.

Notwithstanding territorial disputes, water conflicts, ideological strife, and other disagreements, Turkey enjoys a unique and enviable situation in which no one dares to antagonize it. This is not something to depreciate, bearing in mind neighbors like Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Turkey has used the waning of the cold war and the opportunities opened to it thereafter to weaken its internal and external adversaries and to secure its military and economic capabilities. The country should be readier now to cope with its internal problems, described so cruelly and in an un pitying way by President Demirel (see the quotation in the Introduction to this book.) Furthermore, Turkey's leadership, so much yearning for and thinking of the future that awaits the country in Western Europe – in spite of waves of setbacks, rejections, alienation and ambivalence – has done its utmost *not* to get embroiled in Asian, Balkan, Middle Eastern, or Mediterranean complexities. There is hardly a chance that Turkey would become an active or a warring party in these crises. The country has not fought a war on its territory since the 1920s – a status on a par with only a handful of states. It would be pure imprudence to deviate from this record and to find itself mired in the eastern or Balkan squabbles when its declared visions are far away in the West.

The Turkish encounter with the Caucasus and Central Asian Turkic peoples has aroused emotions, hopes and plans for a different future in which Turkey

is at the center of a revived Pan-Turkism world. Certainly, emotions and hopes exist, perhaps even thrive but, again, one should expect very cautious Turkish behavior. The Turkic world is wrought with ethnic conflicts, other actors are meddling in its affairs, wishing to reap political hegemony, cultural benefits and economic and energy gains. And Turkish nationalism – which was extricated, molded and refined from the ethnic hodgepodge that characterized the Ottoman Empire and which intermittently still needs to prove its prevailing character among Turkey's own fifty or more ethnic groups – might face grave risks. Turkish nationalism that politically, culturally, and socially faces challenges but nevertheless aspires westwards, will be reluctant to be the Turkic ethnic and cultural pivot, let alone its police force. "We are not going to build an Eastern alternative" declared President Demirel, emphasizing the direction that Turkey had *no* intention of taking (see Chapter 4, p. 114).

Internally, too, there are "not"s and "if"s. Turkey's Islam is more Turkish than Pan-Islamic. A declared Muslim politician led the country – appointed, ruled, and ended his tenure through democratic and parliamentary procedures. True, Necmettin Erbakan stayed in office for less than a year, and the democratic procedures were of the Turkish democratic kind in which the military is the shield defending democracy. Still, neither the country's politics nor its ambience were Islamically altered when Turkey chose a Muslim politician for Prime Minister. Predictions are a precarious business; still, Turkey is *not* going to be Islamized *à la* Iran, Algeria or Afghanistan. Neither does the Turkish military consider itself permanently superior to the civil echelons. On the contrary, when during the Gulf crisis there were deep conflicting views between the Turkish executive and the Turkish Chief of Staff, it was the latter who handed in his resignation, *not* the other way round. Similarly, open involvement of the military in governmental decision-making procedures *à la* September 1980 coup is a precedent that would not recur. In 1997, when the military intervened in what eventually brought about the resignation of the Prime Minister, it was through a covert procedure, actually a minor move if compared with the coup of 1980. When the watchful eyes of the EU look for excessive influence by the military in Turkish politics, one could predict that the Turkish democracy is practically safe from overt military interventions.

The early years of the twenty-first century saw two crises and one ray of hope. The economic crisis that erupted in 2001 spoiled many efforts to buttress the Turkish economy and the country's currency. In its turn the economic and fiscal depression led, in 2002, to the collapse of the coalition government that had ruled Turkey since April 1999 – a relatively long period for a Turkish executive – and to a new round of general elections, held in early November 2002. The reforms that the Turkish Grand National Assembly adopted in August 2002 are a great leap forward. The death penalty was abolished, Kurdish education, television, and language courses were made legal. Among the adopted fourteen principles of the reform package, the Turkish parliament left the death penalty for times of war only. (No executions have been carried out in Turkey since

1984, though the death penalty was still legal.) Television broadcasting in languages other than Turkish were made legal. Private schools will be able to use languages other than Turkish. Freedom of expression will prevail with no punishments for criticism against the military, the state, the parliamentary system, the government, the legal system, or Turkish identity. Laws and rules related to freedom of gathering, assembly, and demonstration, will become more lenient. The reforms are indeed wide: right-wingers and nationalists termed them as pure betrayal, a reward to terrorism. Still, it has been a huge leap forward, made with an eye to the EU: the reforms were practically the EU stipulation to start accession negotiations with Turkey.

Future developments will tell whether these Turkish moves will be reciprocated by Europe and the West. If positive, Turkish society will become more pluralistic, open, and liberal minded. If negative, radicalism, introversion, religionism, and excessive nationalism will rule the day in Turkey. Time will tell.

## Note

- 1 See for instance Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirisci (eds), *Turkey in World Politics: An Emerging Multiregional Power*, Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001.



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