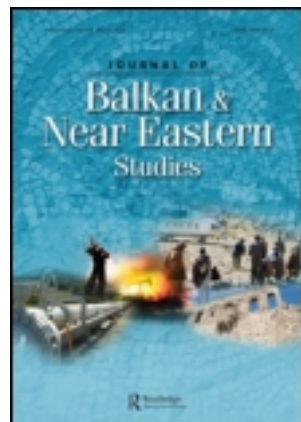


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# The USA–Turkey–Middle East: From the 20th Century to the Present

Nur Bilge Criss

*This study compares the cold war period and contemporary issues which involve the triangle with a focus on Iraq, Syria and Egypt. It traces turning points in the 20th century, present dilemmas and conclusions in a state of flux. Major conclusions are: that a cold war is re-emerging because of Russia's assertion of its world power status and Washington's claims to world leadership. The other is the conspicuous similarity in Turkey between the Democratic Party (1950–60) and the incumbent government who assume(d) that history, civilizational geopolitics and economy would facilitate transition of its proximate neighbourhood into American new world order(s). Evidence suggests why these efforts failed.*

This study compares two epochs, the cold war period as well as the contemporary spillover effects of the cold war on the USA, Turkey and the Middle East triangle. It comprises two major sections: 'The USA and Turkey–Middle East Connection: The 20th Century' and 'The Present', followed by 'Conclusions in a State of Flux'. Instead of the entirety of the geography, focus is on Turkey's proximate neighbours, Iraq, Syria and Egypt. Comparison allows certain conclusions to be drawn.

Firstly, a new cold peace may be threatening because of the Syrian crisis. This crisis may be a litmus test for Russia's assertion of its world power status. In addition, Russia opposes global missile defence systems, intervention in Syria and Iran, and refuses to liquidate Soviet-era nuclear weapons even at America's expense.<sup>1</sup> More importantly, in January 2012, Vladimir Putin's campaign team 'has been insisting that the White House was behind the recent protest rallies in Russia, sponsoring the opposition in the hope of an orange revolution.'<sup>2</sup> Shutting down USAID programmes in Russia signalled that the concerns were real.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, comparison reveals that with the exception between 2000 and 2010, Turkey's relations with Syria have been conflict ridden, and is likely to remain so because of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) foothold in northern Syria, supported by the northern Iraqi autonomous Kurdistan.

Thirdly, the latest crisis serves to deepen the division between Arabs and Turks despite the Justice and Development Party's (JDP) religiously coloured identity politics. Put simply, Turkey is not an Arab country. Even though Arabs live under

different states, they speak the same language and the reference point is to supranational Arabism. Ehud Toledano, an Ottoman historian, stated that Egypt is the leader of the Arab world. Ankara's commercial, financial and strategic interests in the region are not enough to be accepted as a model, let alone as a regional leader.<sup>4</sup>

Last, but not least, is the similarity between the Democrat Party (DP, 1950–60) government and JDP's (2002–) outlook on the Arab countries. The former assumed that historic ties would be sufficient to attract the Arabs to security pacts. The latter expanded on this premise with two major ideas: that economy overcomes all problems, and civilizational geopolitics will make Turkey a regional power.

The next section covers the major turning points in relations during the 20th century when encounters were extremely challenging. Turkey began to employ fine-tuned diplomacy towards the Middle East, despite confrontational relations with Syria in the 1960s, to be discussed later. Until the 21st century, balancing relations with allies and others was of foremost importance to Turkish diplomacy. The interim period between 1964 until the end of the century was marked by gradual multilateralism in Turkey's foreign policies towards the Soviet Union as well as the Middle East, whereby caution against direct involvement in inter-/intra-Arab or the Arab–Israel disputes and conflicts remained paramount. A credible threat against Syria in 1997 to expel the terrorist PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, from Damascus had worked, but only in the aftermath of the cold war, concomitant with Turkey's determination and the military agreement signed with Israel in 1996.<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, foreign policy decision-making, leadership profiles, style and rhetoric changed radically as of 2002. The 'new' foreign policy is inspired by the ambition to establish a commonwealth based on the former Ottoman geography as well as rather broad and vague concepts such as 'strategic depth', 'zero problems with neighbours',<sup>6</sup> populism and a new outlook on geopolitics. According to Bilgin and Bilgiç:

while there is significant continuity in various actors' recourse to geopolitics in justifying their preferred choices for Turkey's foreign policy, Davutoğlu and other JDP policymakers' discourse is distinctive in the way in which they invoke *civilizational geopolitics* . . . Civilizational geopolitics is an understanding of culture and civilization as preordained determinants of international behavior.<sup>7</sup>

The present epoch is discussed in three concentric circles. The first circle involves the post-cold war dynamics of disintegration in connection to regional crises starting with the dissolution of Yugoslavia, which prompted new norms such as humanitarian intervention and international collective responsibility to protect people against atrocities in cases where the state fails to do so. However, transforming a legitimate moral norm into international law proved difficult, if not impossible. The challenge that legitimacy as opposed to legality poses, brings the issue to the end of the cold war when the USA enjoyed unipolarity for two decades.

The second circle of the saga concerns American foreign policies. The dissolution of the Soviet Union endowed the USA with a great sense of triumphalism.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, the war on terror directly bonded national security to the success of globalization sine

qua non. This meant bringing those countries which had not kept up with globalization to the core by force, if need be. It was necessary that ‘America equate its national security with that of globalization’s continued survival and success’, wrote Thomas Barnett. Thus, he reconnected national security strategy to global peace strategy akin to the cold war when the national interests of the free world were bonded to American national interests.<sup>9</sup>

The third concentric circle involves juxtapositions in Turkey’s ‘new’ regional policies, the most peculiar of which was to deliberately alienate Israel, hardly an option. The other issue is Turkey’s involvement in the latest Syrian crisis by taking sides, which opened the country not only to refugees among whom are opposition members of all shades, but also foreign jihadist elements. Recently, Robert Fisk asked the inevitable question of whether Turkey was becoming the Pakistan of the Middle East, a most disconcerting, but realistic question.<sup>10</sup> The analogy is about being a conduit of weapons to fight the Taliban for the former, and to fight the Syrian Army in the second case. It does not take long then, to invite additional terrorist actions in the conduit’s own territory.

The study concludes that comparison of the past and today under the aegis of the USA, Turkey and the proximate Middle East reveals similar patterns even in widely different conjunctures. The current upheaval in Syria may either be the harbinger of a new cold war/peace between the Russian Federation and the USA, or may present an opportunity to draw the former, through negotiation, into the Great Power economic core by opening up to multinational corporations. That said, this may be a difficult enterprise although Moscow became a member of the World Trade Organization in August 2012, because it is keen on asserting its own world power status. A new form of rivalry is in the making while the USA also insists on its role as world leader.<sup>11</sup> Some view this status seeking as ‘US foreign policy adventurism.’<sup>12</sup> Regarding Syria’s largest commercial city Aleppo, Hörstel wrote:

Whenever the US warns there is an imminent danger of violence, even of massacre or atrocities, it pays to take notice. Such predictions seem to have an almost uncanny knack of turning out to be accurate. So recent ‘concerns’ could mean bad news.

It turned out bad indeed.

The JDP government in Turkey doggedly refuses to acknowledge that Ankara is an outsider to the Arab world despite ‘Muslim brotherhood’, a false assumption. One other novelty in foreign policy has been to openly take sides in inter- as well as intra-Arab disputes. Having created enmity where none existed before in the case of Israel is another dimension of hazardous novelties. Lastly, US foreign policy is outsourced to the Sunni/Wahhabi block to encircle Iran and break Tehran’s bonds with Syria, where higher stakes are involved compared to Kermit Roosevelt’s conspiracy to oust the Mossadegh government in 1953.<sup>13</sup> When the Iranian government, under Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, attempted to uphold the nationalization of oil, the British asked the CIA’s help to remove him from the government and restore the young Shah Reza Pahlavi to power. Details of this conspiracy were revealed by

Roosevelt himself in 1979 and in other studies. Current studies, however, point to the fact that this intervention was the major cause of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and of anti-Americanism.

The overall policy implications raise more questions than they provide answers, because prospects grow increasingly bleak. Is the region facing autonomous and eventually sovereign Kurdistan(s)?; prolonged civil war and human violations on ethnic/sectarian lines between Iraqi and Syrian Arabs and Kurds?; how will Turkey respond to increasing numbers of refugees from Syria?; why did Turkey's leadership not see that both Iran and Syria would use the PKK card as retaliation?; why does Ankara allow the foreign 'jihadist' inflow to Turkey?; is a regional war inevitable?; and if so, how is it possible that such a catastrophe is likely to remain limited?

### **The USA and Turkey–Middle East Connection: The 20th Century**

During the height of the cold war (1946–62), insecurities came to the fore. Appraising the world solely from cold war dualities, Turkey's DP government relied on superficial premises to draw its proximate Arab neighbours to regional security formations such as the Middle East Command/Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO, 1951) as well as the Baghdad Pact (1955) to contain Soviet expansionism.

Memoirs of the US Ambassador to Turkey (1951–53) George McGhee, point to the diplomatic efforts exerted by Britain and the USA in the background, and Turkey as the supposed point of attraction, to draw the Arab countries together in a defence pact. MEDO, under British command and control was an ill-conceived project from the beginning. It was not the revolutionary Egypt of Nasser, but King Farouk's government that rejected the offer. And when Egypt did not comply, the rest would not follow. In 1951, a satire journal in Cairo carried the caricature of Turkey's President Celal Bayar as a dog whose leash was held by Britain. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested with an extremely strong note.<sup>14</sup>

MEDO's counterpart, the Baghdad Pact survived for three years. The only Arab country that responded semi-favourably to the idea of a pact was the Iraqi monarchy. Even then, the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Said, stalled by insisting that Ankara must first convince Egypt. Since Ankara's relations with revolutionary Egypt had started on a negative note, subsequent charm offensives from Turkey were to no avail. It took a personal visit from Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes who pressured Iraq to sign the pact.

President Bayar had warned McGhee of probable Arab rejection. However, Menderes' enthusiasm to lead a Middle Eastern NATO was overwhelming. Reports from surveys conducted by US embassies and consulates in the region upon McGhee's initiative, had confirmed Bayar's assessment about the non-cooperative Arab attitudes towards Turkey.<sup>15</sup> However, Menderes pursued the issue. 'In the cities of the Arab world, people are debating whether Israel or Communism is the Arab's Enemy Number One', wrote Arnold Toynbee.

Some are opting for 'positive neutrality', others for the Baghdad Pact. But most Arabs do not live in towns; they work in the fields or on the steppe;

and Arab farmers today are dreaming, not of pacts and treaties, but of pumps and tractors. The pumps and tractors are already operating in large numbers. The big current event in the Asian Arab countries—an event that is certainly going to make history—is the renaissance of the ‘Fertile Crescent’.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, a social movement in Egypt, which turned into formidable organizations throughout the Middle East in our time, *Ikhwan-ı Muslimin* (the Muslim Brotherhood), had already become powerful among the destitute classes of society. Following Marxist thought, the Brotherhood had decided that revolution would come not at the level of state, but society. Something akin to the Socialist International was loosely being organized (Sunni International?). The Chargé d’Affaires of the Turkish embassy observed that the Brotherhood had recruited some 100 youngsters from poor families in Turkey for training at Al Azhar University for the purpose of spreading the call to return to Islam.<sup>17</sup>

Iraq and Syria followed Egypt in tandem with incessant military interventions and turned into Baathist regimes, adopting socialism, undertaken partly for populist reasons and partly to forestall indigenous communists. The concomitant Soviet aid and influence thus became a nightmare for Turkey’s government. Not only did it fear a military intervention against itself (a self-fulfilling prophecy), but now it also felt squeezed by the Soviet threat on its northern border as well as southern, in addition to its communist neighbour, Bulgaria.<sup>18</sup>

In 1956, in an effort to downsize US conventional forces in Europe, President Dwight Eisenhower suggested that ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads may be deployed in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries. Menderes reached out in his 1957 speech to the NATO Council. He iterated that the authority to use the missiles should be given to NATO command or to the national Chiefs of Staff.<sup>19</sup> In 1958, Turkey deployed troops at the Syrian border and conducted military manoeuvres. Moscow and Damascus brought the threat of aggression to the United Nations (UN), whereby Turkey was cautioned against any rash move. The same year, Nasser moved to realize his most ambitious vision of Pan Arabism by joining with Syria in the United Arab Republic (UAR). In a counter move, Turkey was instrumental in forging unity between the Iraqi and Jordanian monarchies in a federal state. This, however, lasted less than two months until the military takeover in Iraq. The UAR also split in 1961 mainly because of rivalries between Syria and Egypt as to who was the real leader of the Arab world.

The assumption that historic ties to the region under the Ottoman Empire eschewed the strength of Arab nationalism and the traumas of decolonization. Ankara was contemptuous of as well as condescending towards the republican nationalistic military interventions in Egypt, Iraq and Syria alike.<sup>20</sup> Politically speaking, therefore, Pahlavi Iran became the focus of cooperation and significance both for Turkey and the USA after the Iraqi revolution when the Baghdad Pact dissolved in 1958. The new security formation entitled CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) comprised the northern tier countries, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey under the auspices of Britain and the USA as observer.

The premise that security concerns would weigh beyond everything else also proved to be misleading, because Turkey and its allies' security concerns did not converge with that of the Arab countries. Further was the collective memory which pointed to Turkey for having broken away from the ranks of the Muslim majority Arab world by abandoning the Arab alphabet, adopting secularism, and perhaps worse yet, having voted for the partition of Palestine in 1948 and for recognizing the state of Israel one year later. In 1963, Nasser told a Turkish journalist that he was ready to switch sides if only the USA could 'solve the Israel problem' and extend developmental aid to Egypt. When the excitable young journalist relayed this message to then Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, he only met with a quizzical smile.<sup>21</sup> Kemal Karpat traces Arab discontent with the Turks to 1856, when a reform edict declared equality of all religions in the Empire.<sup>22</sup> The originator of the term 'clash of civilizations', Bernard Lewis, elaborates on the divisive effect of religions, because all three religions of the book reserve 'the truth' only to themselves.<sup>23</sup>

Yet another act, closer in time, which conditioned Arabs against the Turks was Ankara's incorporation of the strategically viable province of Alexandretta between 1936 and 1939. The province was one of the administrative districts in Syria, divided by the French mandatory. It also had one of the three best harbours for a naval base in all of the eastern Mediterranean as well, the other two being Alexandretta of Egypt and Turkey's Marmaris.<sup>24</sup> Facing Cyprus across the sea with two British bases, the harbour could accommodate friendly forces and deter hostile powers. The French mandate was ending in 1936 and Ankara grew increasingly leery of the former mandate's vulnerability in the upcoming war. Nazi Germany's probes into Turkey through its vast propaganda machine and *anchluss* with Austria in 1938 was noted in Turkey as 'une sorte de boulevard des Etats danubiens et balkaniques'.<sup>25</sup> There just might be no end to Nazi transgression. In 1939, when the territory came into Turkey's fold, a direct line of communication was secured with the British in Cyprus and a tripartite agreement between Turkey, Britain and France followed. The next significant timeframe for Turkey and the USA in the Middle East would begin after the Second World War.

The USA had not been a total stranger in that geography. American traders and sailors, adventurers under the employ of 'exotic' rulers of the East, Protestant missionaries, schools and hospitals left their mark in the 19th-century Levant and Anatolia.<sup>26</sup> However, it was not until after the Second World War that the USA began to get politically involved, specifically on six occasions. One was to establish a low-profile military aid relationship with Turkey in 1946 upon President İsmet İnönü's request. The second development was when Greece and Turkey were admitted to NATO in 1952, which entailed access to bases. Third was the US role in dismantling Mohammad Mossadegh's premiership in Iran mainly because he upheld the nationalization of the oil industry (1953). The fourth occasion which entrenched American security interests in the region was the Eisenhower doctrine of 1957, which enabled the USA to intervene in the Middle East upon the invitation of governments who faced armed aggression, direct or indirect. Not only did this doctrine become operational one year later in Lebanon, it also caused concern to all political parties in opposition.<sup>27</sup>

A fifth occasion of significance, the American presence in Saudi Arabia, was described by Toynbee as follows:

Abqaiq, Ras Tanura, Dhahran: the names are Arabic, but the three cities—planted as though they are on the Arabian desert—are as American as New York itself. America in Arabia: this is one of the wonders of the present-day world.<sup>28</sup>

Toynbee added, however, ‘Quo vadimus? What lies in the future? May the God who is the God of both Muslims and Christians guide Man’s racing feet out of the paths of destruction.’<sup>29</sup> In the not so distant north, Turkey grew consistently uneasy about ‘out of area’ operations conducted by the USA due to accidents that involved American reconnaissance planes over Soviet air space both because it resonated on Turkey’s sovereignty and also caused diplomatic scandals with the Soviets respectively in 1960, 1965 and 1967.<sup>30</sup> The cold war began to subside after a major crisis over the Soviet missiles in Cuba in 1962. As of the 1970s, what is now called the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates came into the fold of US national interest for energy security.<sup>31</sup> The anchor was Saudi Arabia, having negotiated a commitment from President Franklin Roosevelt for protection in 1945. Therefore, the sixth and last entrenchment of America in the geography was intact.

The USA had at least some allies in the Arab world and Pahlavi Iran (until the 1979 Islamic Revolution). The same case did not hold for Turkey. After the military intervention in 1960, Ankara took initiatives towards a rapprochement with Arab countries, instigated mainly by the Cyprus problem. Relations with Iraq assumed cordiality, but the Syrian campaign to reclaim Hatay received immediate support from the Arab League and a declaration by all Arab ambassadors in Ankara in favour of Damascus. Consequently, Turkey’s President Cemal Gürsel announced in İskenderun (Alexandretta) that any attempt by Syria to reunite with Hatay would be considered *casus belli*.<sup>32</sup> The border was sealed and mines laid on the Turkish side. The 1966 land reform in Syria resulted in the expropriation of private properties owned by Turkish citizens. Turkey retaliated in kind. The Iraqi leadership, on the other hand, ignored the situation and declared goodwill towards Ankara.<sup>33</sup>

The 1970s political scene in Turkey was marked by short-lived coalition governments, domestic terrorism between the rightists, leftists and ‘religious youth’. Further, in 1974, Turkey’s military intervention in Cyprus resulted in the US arms embargo, coupled with foreign credits being curtailed. That same year there was a most unlikely coalition government in Turkey, with the social democrat Bülent Ecevit’s (PM) Republican People’s Party (RPP) and Islamist Necmettin Erbakan’s (Deputy PM) National Salvation Party (NSP). A furious, but private reaction came from the Saudi King Faisal. Speaking to a Turkish journalist, the King accused Ecevit of being a communist and Baathist. He was even more angry with Erbakan for having ‘sold out to the communists’. Faisal refused to listen to arguments to the contrary. In March 1974, the top foreign affairs consultant to the Saudi King relayed a message to the same journalist that the Americans were clearly against both Ecevit and Erbakan. Accordingly, Washington had asked Riyadh to freeze its relations with Turkey. At the time Erbakan had scheduled a visit to Saudi Arabia in search for oil and credit. Could that visit be cancelled asked the consultant. The message was delivered in as politically correct language as possible, but Erbakan went anyway, only to be met with a cold shoulder.<sup>34</sup>



Coalition governments were unable to harness domestic terrorism in Turkey, which resulted in the September 1980 military intervention. An offshoot of myriad terrorist organizations turned out to be PKK, whose militants were accommodated in Syria and Iraq. Subsequently, in 1979 the US arms embargo ended and a new Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement was signed in 1980. By then, the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran which ensued in the hostage crisis between Tehran and Washington reverted attention to the Middle East. The situation from then on had direct implications for Ankara. Upon suggestions that Turkey would be the most convenient place from which to stage military operations towards the Persian Gulf region, Turkey's Ambassador to the USA Şükrü Elekdağ had to reiterate what Ankara's policy vis-à-vis the Middle East was:

It would be absurd and unreasonable to expect Turkey to support or participate in an 'out-area' operation which is not jointly supported by all members of the alliance. Furthermore, these theories and hypotheses totally neglect the principles guiding Turkey's Middle Eastern policies. Namely, to pursue a strict policy of non-interference in internal affairs of the Arab and Middle Eastern states, to refrain from taking sides in inter-Arab disputes and conflicts, and to accelerate the remarkable new thrust in Turkish policy toward Middle East and Islamic countries in all fields, especially economic, commercial and cultural. Therefore, in candor I would say that in weighing United States stakes in Turkey, the criterion should be the present considerable military and strategic contribution of Turkey to the Western alliance, and not the possibilities of involving Turkey in Middle East contingencies.<sup>35</sup>

The next two decades were transitional years for Turkey, which opened to the market economy, was enthusiastic about European Union (EU) membership, and enhanced its relations with the former Soviet realm as well as with Russia and the Middle East, including Israel, at long last without any apologies.<sup>36</sup>

Towards the century's end, identity politics became fashionable not only in academia, but also in government circles. In the aftermath of 9/11, these policies became operational in the context of the war against terrorism. The new, but hallow identity nomenclature portrayed as either 'radical Islam' or 'moderate Islam' became dominant in references to the Middle East. It was just another step from there to promote Turkey's Middle Eastern identity. Turkey, under the JDP governments embraced this identity, blended it with its version of 'Grand Strategy' based on civilizational geopolitics and vainglorious rhetoric. The JDP, however, managed to increase economic relations with the Middle East and made inroads in Africa, for the first time in Republican history, Ankara became a donor country, and succeeded in holding a rotational position on the UN Security Council (2010–11). The USA–Turkey–Middle East triangle is diversified by many factors and has grown multiple angles at present, so it may best be analysed in concentric circles, all of which are intricately connected.

## The Present

A salient tapestry of the post-cold war world are the dynamics of integration and disintegration. Disintegration in Yugoslavia, Somalia and Sudan were attended by mass murders and other atrocities. The former ideological warfare deteriorated into ‘Africa’s dirty wars’.<sup>37</sup> Atrocities resulted in a new concept, the legitimate right and duty of the international community to act collectively against states which perpetrate or allow inhumanities. ‘By the end of 2001 [the UN] International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) formulated undertaking humanitarian intervention in terms of responsibility to protect (RtoP).’<sup>38</sup> Humanitarian intervention was not written into international law, because many countries had reservations about its use and misuse. Although accepted as a moral norm, the UN decided to take it up on a case-by-case basis.

There are certain stipulations, however, which make humanitarian intervention a possibility. One is the responsibility of the sovereign state to protect its people. Secondly, if the first stipulation fails, international assistance and capacity building to protect may become operational. Third, timely and decisive collective action may be taken against a state. This brings the topic to our second concentric circle, the foreign policy world of the USA. Towards the end of her tenure as US Secretary of State in 2008, Condoleeza Rice stated that through democratic state building ‘Washington will change the world in America’s image.’<sup>39</sup>

Troubled by American unilateralism, an international law expert wrote that the 1997 Project for the New American Century

called for an international order that was friendlier to America’s security, prosperity, and principles, and that targeted international rules such as those that allowed the detention of Pinochet and the creation of the Kyoto Protocol and the ICC (International Criminal Court) statute.<sup>40</sup>

Sands laments ‘a sadly exceptionalist and isolationist perspective that sees America as an island of law hermetically sealed off from the rest of the world.’<sup>41</sup>

That exceptionalism was laid out by a strategic consultant in terms militaristic and managerial, inspired by systems administration.<sup>42</sup> The lexicon of this strategy exudes aggression. Accordingly, until 9/11, globalization meant the free flow of capital, finances, trade and professionals. However, the global war on terrorism introduced a security dimension to globalization. Countries which had integrated their national economies with the global economy and complied with the security rule set made up the Functional Core. However, the Middle East, to a large extent, which remained outside interconnectedness was the Non-integrating Gap. The Seam States that shared borders with the non-integrating gap, such as Turkey were expected to contribute to international security by facilitating integration. Another connection is that of the Military–Market nexus which is both good for business and national strategy. Hence, when resistance to globalization results in conflict, military operations are followed by military and civilian systems administrators to manage business contracts.

According to Naomi Klein, the official discourse, ‘the triumph of deregulated capitalism has been born of freedom, that unfettered free markets go hand in hand with democracy’ does not reflect reality. Imposition of this version of capitalism is enforced through ‘brutal coercion’.<sup>43</sup> She contends that exploiting crisis and disaster has been the modus operandi of the Milton Friedman school of economics.<sup>44</sup>

Compounding the positions taken above, the strategy of preventive war also evolved into thinking that ‘by their very existence dictatorships constituted an unacceptable threat. The only sure remedy to the problem of vulnerability . . . was to bring despotic regimes into full compliance with American norms, using force if necessary to do so.’<sup>45</sup> In 1979, the Carter Doctrine had already declared that the Persian Gulf region was a vital national security interest and any assault there would be met by military force.<sup>46</sup>

Plausibly having drawn some lessons from the war on Iraq, President Barack Obama opts for using ‘smart power’, special operations units. However, this does not preclude indirect intervention. Consequently, in the Syrian crisis the idea that regional states should take on the responsibility has been flaunted. This policy directly implicates Turkey, which comprises the innermost picture of the concentric circles.

When insurrections began in Syria, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan adopted an inimical rhetoric against President Bashar al-Assad. Turkey accommodated refugees from Syria. Then, the ‘Syrian Free Army’ and leader of the Syrian Muslim Brothers also met with Turkish hospitality. However, things began to take on a different hue with speculations about Turkey’s possible intervention in Syria, which emanated from *Al-Hayat* and *Ashraq Al Awsar* dailies, sponsored by Saudi Arabia and published in London.<sup>47</sup> In July 2012, Ian Lesser wrote:

The evolution of the Syrian conflict, and its broader regional consequences, will have important implications for Ankara’s regional role and the future of Turkish–Western relations. The repair of Turkish–Western strategic relationship is no longer optional but essential for both sides.<sup>48</sup>

Consequently, in addition to all the threats emanating from Turkey’s neighbourhood, Russia included, its Western relations were also at stake. This threatening phrase alone points to the failure of the ‘new’ Turkish diplomacy, which cornered itself into a quagmire. While the worst scenario unfolded in Syria, where anarchy reigns, opposition forces on the ground are fractured into mobs led by strongmen sworn to vengeance.<sup>49</sup>

In February 2012, Cemil Çiçek, Speaker of the Parliament, attended a G20 conference in Riyadh. A Saudi journalist commented, ‘At the beginning of the Syrian crisis Turkish authorities were very enthusiastic about resolving the crisis. But, we do not see the same enthusiasm recently.’ Çiçek scoffed, ‘Don’t push us on that subject. Don’t everyone stay on the sidelines expecting Turkey to resolve this problem. No one should succumb to oriental cunning (*Şark kurnazlığı*). Turkey is carrying out its own responsibilities.’<sup>50</sup>

Apart from the orientalist irony, this was the first public signal that the Turkish government had no intention of intervening in Syria unilaterally.<sup>51</sup> In fact, when a Turkish unarmed reconnaissance jet crashed in Syrian home-waters, thunderous rhetoric followed. Erdoğan called for a NATO meeting, perhaps to invoke Article 5,

that an attack on one member is to be considered an attack on all (operationalized only one time, after 9/11). To the contrary, the final resolution was based on Article 4 and declared support for Turkey.

JDP's former wavering policies in support of Iran, Hamas, Syria, Sudan and Libya crystallized in a turnabout when Erdoğan realized that he might be totally isolated from the Allies.<sup>52</sup> The bout was remarkable against al-Assad after having lifted visa requirements, holding common cabinet meetings and even spending holidays *en famille*.

Ziya Öniş wrote, 'The more that Turkey is actively involved in the domestic and regional politics of the Middle East, the more it is likely to contribute to further instability and divisiveness in an already highly volatile region.'<sup>53</sup> However, there is no indication that the leadership considers that their policies have been counter-productive with Allies and adversaries alike. As with any other essay, there must be an overall conclusion, however this story does not end.

### Conclusions in a State of Flux

State behaviour during the cold war is reasonably well documented and therefore is comprehensible. At present, the Turkish government's assumption that historic ties and investments would help bring the 'non-integrating gap' into the global economy proved a fragile base for policymakers. Building a better future is important, but the architects need to be indigenous. People should be allowed to settle their own scores, because intervention brings unforeseen results.

In Turkey's case, the JDP government got involved in the Syrian crisis as well as adopting an adversarial position against Baghdad. Today, PKK is emboldened by the crises and stepped up its terrorist attacks in south-eastern Turkey. Why did the JDP fail to see that Damascus would play the PKK card once again, if desperate?

Iraq recently cancelled the Turkish Petroleum Company's contract. Baghdad's retaliation targets policies perceived to be sectarian against the Shi'i Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki; JDP's circumvention of Baghdad by concluding oil agreements with the Kurdish autonomous region, and against protection extended to the former deputy prime minister, Tariq al-Hashimi (Sunni), accused of inciting terrorism.

Residues of Syrian bombs are falling on Turkish territory. One explanation was that Assad may be signalling that he is capable of expanding Syria's civil war to the region unless foreign countries stop empowering the opposition.<sup>54</sup>

A Russian analyst recently criticized the JDP for collaboration with al-Qa'ida.<sup>55</sup> This does not bode well for Turkey's international standing if Igor Pankratenko's evidence can be corroborated. Civilizational geopolitics and its trajectory Sunni/Muslim brotherhood may be maximized by the JDP to collaborate with the radical foreign elements against Damascus. This is not welcome to the USA anymore than to Russia as the creation of the Syrian National Coalition in Doha attests. Quo vadimus?

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