Contentious Issues of Security and the Future of Turkey

Edited by Nursin Atesoglu Guney
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This very thoughtful volume on security issues and Turkey's future is a tribute to the maturity and trenchancy of Turkish scholarship on the subject. We found the analysis of the Caucasus and of Turkey's relationship to the "two Wests" (the US and EU), Russia and energy resource development (oil and gas) particularly helpful. At the same time, the volume also reveals certain weaknesses in approach which must be considered. Two minor flaws should perhaps be noted. H. Sonmez Atesoglu errs in listing Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia as "ex-Soviet republics" (p. 154) and typographical errors sometimes confuse the reader on pp. 6, 7, and 107. Finally, the Glossary is very helpful but it would also be useful to have the bibliography list the full names of authors.

The first analytical weakness is the lack of non-Turkish contributors since only two are included and they are both American (Mowle, Ch. 2 and Winrow, Ch. 5). Where are the British, French, German, and Greek specialists on Turkish foreign policy? If there are any national proclivities in Turkish scholarship they could have been offset by inclusion of other national experts on this very sensitive and controversial subject of Turkish foreign policy. One notes between the lines that some contributors are partial to the elite secularist Republican People's Party (CHP), while others support the Justice and Development (AKP) Party. Thus Aysegul Sever suggests gently (p. 82) the need for "democratization" and "economic progress" as part of Turkey's progress toward partnership with both the US and EU. Similarly, Ozden Zeynep Oktav quotes Hakan Yavuz who argues the need in Turkey of "promoting pluralism and democracy" (p. 90). This need was demonstrated to us last July when we were privileged to watch the Turkish elections in which the "democracy pole" in Turkish politics won a resounding victory over the elite "secularist" pole of Turkish domestic politics in the resounding AKP victory with the Army, guarantor of Turkish secularism, remaining in its barracks despite some public grumblings on its website. It remains to be seen if the two "poles" of Turkish politics can be reconciled as Turkey hopefully moves toward a unitary democratic state with a good chance of entering the EU.

Moreover, in discussing the Armenian issue, most contributors describe it as an "alleged genocide" as in Mahmut Bali Aykan's Ch. 4. This author gives the essential

dates and even considers the current "hot button issue" of "modern Turkey's perceived oppression of her Kurdish populations and undemocratic treatment of her non-Muslim minority citizens" (p. 55). He correctly notes Washington's refusal to press these issues or even the date (24 April 1915). This takes a good deal of intellectual courage and is to be commended.

But there was nothing "alleged" about what happened in 1915, before the founding of the Turkish Republic, any more than there is about US policy toward the American Indians at Wounded Knee or the "Trail of Tears". It is a further tribute to the maturation of Turkish political culture that many intellectuals (e.g., Orhan Pamuk) have begun to raise the issue despite the threat of criminal action against them.

More serious analytically, however, is a seeming reluctance to consider the policy impact of the undoubtedly constructive Turkish Government participation in NATO and other military (hard power) contributions. One reads a detailed list of such Turkish military contributions without very much consideration of the effectiveness of NATO, ISAF, and other foreign policy actions.[1] Thus H. Sonmez Atesoglu correctly notes in Ch. 10 (p. 151) that he adopts "a realist approach" in assessing the "future of Greece and Turkey". We suggest that this "realist approach" is used throughout the book by all contributors even in the otherwise trenchant Ch. 7 by Visne Korkmaz on the security environment of Eurasia. This is the only place in the book where we could find any reference to Professor Joseph S. Nye's path breaking concept of "soft power" mentioned and that is in terms of EU policy preferences (p. 106).[2]

But the "fatal flaw" of "hard power" realism as a "single-factor" explanation is that it overstresses military force and thus is not really "realistic". For as this text and Professor Korkmaz herself trenchantly shows, there are severe limitations on the effectiveness of military force to solve political problems. Throughout the book very effective criticisms of US policy in Iraq are offered and Nye notes the vital role which NATO and the Marshall Plan played in the revival of Europe after World War II. One can also see in our text clear and trenchant critiques of US policy in Iraq which is one of the many strengths of the text. But the frequent mention of Turkish contributions to NATO and other military forces often neglects an assessment of their political or even military effectiveness.

One could also mention the failure of Israeli policy in Lebanon against Hezbollah, against Hamas in the Gaza Strip or even Turkish policy in its Southeast in dealing with the terrorist PKK. Thus a "realist" military policy, especially a unilateral military policy is often strikingly ineffective against terrorist threats. Nye suggests as an essential adjunct to military "hard" power what professors Nitin

Nohria and Anthony Mayo term "contextual intelligence". This is defined as "the intuitive diagnostic skill that helps … align tactics with objectives to create smart strategies in varying situations". Thus our text seems to lack a fundamental "realism" in leaving out both "soft power" and "contextual intelligence."

A final weakness of Professor Korkmaz's otherwise very trenchant Ch. 7 on the "Fluctuating Security Environment of Eurasia" is her brief beginning analysis of Sir Halford Mackinder's definitions of "Eurasia". She early concedes his definitions are "ductile" (f.n. 1, p. 99). But if Mackinder is guilty of continually revising his definition in his famous study, "The Geographical Pivot of History" (1904) and the changes in Eurasia he introduced in his book published during the Versailles Peace Conference, Democratic Ideals and Reality – if his "Eurasia" kept changing, how can it be used as a valid metric for the definition? Professor Korkmaz carefully notes that today "Eurasia" is "slightly different" from what Mackinder projected (p. 99). And she also correctly notes that "Nowadays, the Caucasus-Central Asia is accepted as the focal point of Eurasia" (p. 99). This despite her admission that "Many analysts believe that Eurasia has no natural boundary"! But if we cannot define Eurasia, how can we use the area as the subject of our analysis?[3]

She also fails to consider Mackinder's preference for sea power over land power despite the results of World War I and II in which land power clearly triumphed over sea power as witness the Red Army and D-Day in Europe. The truth is that Mackinder was a geopolitical analyst who believed in geography as a single-factor explanation of victory in warfare.

Still despite his weaknesses, Korkmaz seems to us correct in her use of Eurasia as she defines it in her most thorough analysis. Since the Turks live in this area, and have for centuries, they seem to understand the neighbourhood far better than most American and European observers.

A final chapter with which we had difficulty was that of Mustafa Turkes' Ch. 11, "Cycles of Transformation of the Cyprus Question". He begins with a questionable assertion, that the "so-called Annan Plan … was the EU's hegemonic project" (p. 159). He suggests that the Annan Plan was the last EU initiative when in fact it was developed at least officially by the United Nations under the leadership of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative. Now the actual Annan Plan approved by vote of the Turkish Cypriots (T/C's) and rejected by the Greek Cypriots (G/C's) on 24 April 2004, was the last of five versions, i.e. Annan Plan V. Turkes' argument that many Greeks wished for a unitary democratic state under Greek domination can be successfully argued in our opinion. It can also be argued that Greek mainland and G/C opinion on Aphrodite's island saw their numerical superiority (80 per cent G/C vs. 18 per cent T/C) as controlling while forgetting the

propinquity of Turkey only a short distance away. Thus the tragic history of the island can be seen as a conflict between two poles of power: numerical superiority (Greek) vs. propinquity (Turkey). This conflict led in our view to the effort of the Greek dictatorship to remove Makarios as President which in turn led to the Turkish incursion of the "July Days" of 1974. Moreover, Greek analysts often neglect the effort by Makarios of 30 November 1963 via his 13 Points unilaterally to amend the 1960 London-Zurich Agreements which gave the T/C's an effective veto on governance of the island.

But nowhere in Turkes' analysis does he mention numerical superiority or the fact that twice the colonial power, Great Britain, had offered Athens the entire island (once under Venizelos and once in 1915) if it would support London. Nor does he mention the Treaty of Guarantee Article IV which required an intervening Power to restore the status quo ante bellum after an intervention such as 20 July 1974. Although Ankara did consult as required by the Article, Turkey clearly violated international law by later seizing 37 per cent of the island of Aphrodite and establishing via a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) an allegedly independent statelet, the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus'. That this statelet was not independent in international law is clearly shown by the fact that only Turkey has recognised it to this day.

Moreover, Turkes suggests (pp. 164-166) that the EU's then term-President, Paavo Lipponen sent Ankara a letter committing the European Union not to admit the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) to the EU unless the division of Cyprus was overcome by an agreed solution. But the EU term-President has no such power since the only authority to make such a commitment lay with the Council of the European Union representing the Member States. The term-President is responsible for the elaboration of compromise positions that integrate conflicting Member State interests. Any attempt to compel the EU to avoid admitting the ROC to the EU would have presumably faced a clear veto by Greece. Although the EU lacks a "constitution" and clear authority is not always obvious, the EU President changes every six months and is a facilitator rather than an authoritative institution. In sum, Lipponen lacked any constitutional power to compel the EU in the direction Turkes suggests.

Thus we conclude that the history of Cyprus unification negotiations is a tangled and difficult one – a series of "false dawns" as one article suggests.[4] It may be true that the Cyprus problem is like a padlock with four keys held by the G/C's, the T/C's, Greece and Turkey. Perhaps current negotiations between the ROC President, Demetris Christofias and the T/C leader, Mehmet Ali Talat will be successful given the new AKP Government in Ankara and the desire of the current Athens Government for a rapprochement with Turkey. Past history does not encourage us

to be sanguine but we hope that an island-wide bizonal federated state will emerge approved by G/C's, T/C's, Turkey and Greece on a basis which meets the needs of the two poles of power discussed above and providing for a democratic Republic of all Cyprus. Only time will tell.

Glen D. Camp

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1. For example, cf. the biting criticism of current US NATO policy by Steven Lee Myers and Thom Shanker in the New York Times of 13 March 2008, p. A6, "Conflicts Throw NATO Expansion and Bush's Trans-Atlantic Legacy, Into Doubt".
2. For a brief exegesis of Nye's views on his soft power part of a "Liberal Realist Foreign Policy", cf. Harvard Magazine (March-April, 2008) cf. [http://harvardmagazine.com/2008/03/toward-a liberal-realist.html].
3. For a more complete discussion of Mackinder and his intellectual progeny and predecessors, cf. Howard C. Perkins, International Relations, The World Community in Transition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 3rd Ed., 1969), pp. 40-41.
4. See Cyprus – Another False Dawn? in the International Herald Tribune of Friday, 28 March 2008.