

TURKEY'S TRADITIONAL MIDDLE EAST POLICY AND ÖZALIST DIPLOMACY: GULF CRISIS REVISITED

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ABSTRACT

This essay is primarily designed to make an humble contribution to a theoretical debate concerning the conventional patterns of modern Turkish foreign policy in general, Turkey's Middle Eastern politics in particular and the role of leadership in decision making process within the context of the Second Gulf Crisis and Özalist Diplomacy.

Introduction

From the perspective of international politics, the Second Gulf Crisis was certainly one of the most remarkable turning points of world history. Also, many would agree that it has had tremendous implications not only for global politics but also for regional relations and national policies. One of the countries which has been affected by the Crisis is of course Turkey. In this respect, many things can be said about it, but I would rather try in this essay to touch upon a theoretical debate concerning the conventional patterns of modern Turkish foreign policy in general, Turkey's Middle Eastern politics in particular and the role of leadership in decision making process within the context of the Second Gulf Crisis.

Related with the Crisis at the beginning of the 1990s, it is generally argued that Turkish attitude towards the Middle East contradicted its traditional policy regarding to the region, which has been applied for decades. In addition, some argued that during the crisis the role played by Turgut Özal as president and a political figure in decision making process changed the conventional way of conducting Turkish foreign policy essentially.

However, when we look at these kind of assertions from a broader perspective, taking into account both the conventional policy making patterns of Turkish foreign policy and Turkey's understanding of relationship towards the Middle East in general within the context of an observable period, one must realise that the above mentioned assertions do not match historical

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realities.¹ Especially, the point of the contradiction (or shift/change) in-between Turkey's traditional Middle Eastern policies and the Second Gulf Crisis policy needs to be evaluated from two respects at least.

(1) Above all, Turkey's first reaction to the Crisis particularly when Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990 confirmed Ankara's determination to act according to its conventional approach to the region. That is, Turkey would have remained neutral towards inter-state conflicts in the Middle East and would not have interfered in inter-Arab relations had the Crisis remained as a regional conflict. (2) But the Crisis went beyond to be a simple regional problem through the intervention of the West led by the United States of America (US) and then United Nations (UN). That is, it became first westernised² and then internationalised issue. As it is clearly captured by Samuel Huntington as well, "almost invariably Western leaders claim they are acting on behalf of "the world community". One minor lapse occurred during the run-up to the Gulf War. In an interview on "Good Morning America", Dec.21, 1990, British Prime Minister John Major referred to the actions "the West" was taking against Saddam Hussein. He quickly corrected himself and subsequently referred to "the world community". He was, however, correct when he erred."³ Despite of the last point of Huntington, it is not impossible to think that the British Prime was also true when he was erred, because in addition to the Western character of the intervention, he pointed out another side of the Kuwaiti affairs-its internationalisation. More clearly, perhaps Turkey seemed to be leaving one of its traditional patterns of policy making aside (non-intervention to inter Arab conflicts), but this pattern was very soon replaced by the two more important patterns of Turkish foreign policy behaviour: westernism and internationalism. Therefore, Turkey's pro-Western

¹ For conventional patterns see for example: S. Calis, **The Role of Identity in the Making of Modern Turkish Foreign Policy**, Unpublished PhD Thesis, The University of Nottingham, Nottingham, 1996, pp: 34-90. R. D. Robinson, **The First Turkish Republic: A Case Study in National Development**, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965, pp.172-177. K. H. Karpat, *Turkey's Foreign Policy in Transition*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975. H. Bagcı, "Demokrat Partinin Ortadoğu Politikası", in F. Sönmezoğlu, **Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi**, İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 1994. S. Tashan, "Contemporary Turkish Policies in the Middle East: Prospect and Constrains", **Middle East Review**, Vol.15, no.2., Spring 1985, pp. 65-67. G. Aybet, **Turkey's Foreign Policy and Its implications for the West**, London: RUSI, 1994, pp.1-2. R. Gözen, "Patterns in Turkish Foreign Policy Behaviour Towards the Middle East", **Foreign Policy**, Vol.19, nos-3-4, 1995, pp.70-100.

² For a different argument see: G. Aybet, "Turkey in its Geo-strategic Environment", in **Rusi and Brassey's Defence Yearbook 1992**, London, p.102.

³ S. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilisations?", **Foreign Affairs**, Vol.72, no.3, Summer 1993, p.39, fn.4.

policies such as its close cooperation with the US and its implementation of all the UN sanctions against Iraq do not contradict, but certainly confirm Ankara's conventional patterns of foreign policy.

As for the role of leadership in decision making process in general and the role of Özal in particular, this point also requires a careful analysis before reaching any conclusion. First of all, Özal's place in this particular case resembles not to those presidents who had taken a very low profile role in decision making process indeed. However, his participation in decisions sounded very much to those of presidents who had an active role in foreign policy making particularly at times in crisis. Therefore, Özal's role during the Gulf Crisis did not contradict Turkey's conventional patterns of policy-making but confirmed it in many respects.⁴ Nor did the role of leadership change fundamentally with the active personality and hawkish approaches of Özal towards foreign policy issues, because he was not so much free in determining policies mainly due to the fact that powerful statist organisations such as the National Security Council and impeded him in many ways.

Rationalising Process of Initial Indecision

If we look at briefly the events after the invasion of Kuwait, it is possible to see how the above outlined process worked during the Crisis. Soon after the invasion, the Turkish government called its National Security Council (NSC) to discuss the problem.⁵ Following the NSC meeting which was held under the chairmanship of President Turgut Özal, as Ankara was mildly criticising Iraq, it preferred to use a very cautious language. It was also declared that Turkey would neither close the Kirkuk-Yumurtalık Pipeline nor take any further action against its neighbour.⁶

⁴ For the role of Turkish leaders including Özal see: E. Yavuzalp, **Liderlerimiz ve Dış Politika**, Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1996. For scholarly analysis see: M. Tamkoç, **The Warrior Diplomats: Guardians of National Security and Modernisation of Turkey**, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1976. S. Calis, "The Turkish State's Identity and Foreign Policy Decision Making Process", **Mediterranean Quarterly**, Vol.6, no.2, Spring 1995, pp.135-155. R. Gözen, "Turgut Özal and Turkish Foreign Policy: Style and Vision", **Foreign Policy**, Vol.20, nos.3-4, 1996, pp. 69-102.

⁵ **Hürriyet**, 3 August 1990. W. Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis", **International Affairs**, Vol.68, no.4, 1992, pp.679-692. R. Gözen, "Türkiye'nin İkinci Körfez Savaşı: Aktif Politika ve Sonuçları", in İhsan D. Dağı, **Türk Dış Politikasında Gelenek ve Değişim**, Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 1998, 177-216. For a different but an insider's account see particularly: N. Torumtay, **Değişen Stratejilerin Odağında Türkiye**, İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1996, pp.29-83. See also: N. Torumtay, **Orgeneral Necip Torumtay'ın Anıları**, İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1994, pp.106-130.

⁶ **Milliyet**, 4 August 1990.

This should not be seen as a surprise decision, because as in the many other countries, the invasion caught the Turkish decision-makers unprepared too.⁷ Probably Mr. Özal himself had an information about Saddam's intentions towards Kuwait,⁸ but it is clear that such knowledge could not be used, at the least for a foreign policy action, unless the reality came to be known by everybody. Many would agree that intelligence is the business of big powers for taking action before the World public opinion was informed adequately.

Therefore, Turkey had in fact very little room to act before big powers decided what kind of action is taken. Indeed, after the invasion of Kuwait the leader(s) of international community seemed to be paused for a while in order to show their reactions. Nor did the UN show a strong reaction on the day Iraq invaded Kuwait.⁹ As far as it is understood from the developments of events, Turkey had taken a firm stand against the illegal action of the Baghdad government, but Ankara preferred delaying to declare it until the accumulation of international community's reaction. And in such a situation Turkey also had to take into account its existing connections with Iraq. Indeed, when Kuwait was invaded, there was not any serious problem in Ankara's relations with Iraq, relations that had further developed in the 1980s. For the Turkish economy as Iraq offered an important market for exporters, the Yumurtalık-Kirkuk Oil Pipeline was of vital importance in terms of both pipeline royalties and line of importing oil to Turkey.¹⁰ Obviously, the Turkish Government could not afford to close it and turn its back to Iraq suddenly.

From the perspective of regional politics, such a thing would also be meaningless in fact, because the other Iraqi Pipeline across Saudi Arabia continued to be operational and the other countries in the region did not take any action against Baghdad,¹¹ as one of the Turkish State Ministers pointed

⁷ **Interview** with Kamran İnan, diplomat, statesman and politician. During the Gulf Crisis he was the state minister. This interview was conducted by the author in Ankara on 18 August 1993.

⁸ According to a Turkish journalist close to Özal (Yavuz Gökmen) argues that for Özal the invasion of Kuwait was not a surprise. Y. Gökmen, **Özal Sendromu**, Ankara: Verso Yayıncılık, 1992, p.184.

⁹ In fact, the decision of Turkish National Security Council was not more than a repetition of the UN Security Council's Resolution 660. According to the Resolution 660, the UN (1) condemns the invasion, (2) demands the withdrawal of Iraq and (3) calls upon Iraq and Kuwait to solve their problems with negotiations. UN Security Council Resolution 660, S/RES/660 (1990), 2 August 1990.

¹⁰ Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis", p.684.

¹¹ After the invasion, Özal started his telephone diplomacy and discussed the problem with Rafsanjani, Esad and King Fahd as well as Bush. **Türkiye**, 4 August 1990. **Milliyet**, 5 August 1990.

out.¹² In addition, at the early stage of the Kuwaiti invasion the Turkish government had the opinion that it was an inter-Arab problem and this conflict would not last too long.¹³

The Turkish decision makers also had to take into account Iraq's position in the region, indeed, as a country with which Turkey shares the longest border and which holds the second largest Kurdish population after Turkey.¹⁴ Perhaps Ankara was faced with the dilemma of avoiding destabilisation of Iraq and maintaining the balance of power in the region, but Turkey first preferred the latter, because of its pressing domestic problems with the Kurdish terrorist activities in the Southern Anatolia.¹⁵ Particularly for this reason, Turkey had appeared to be reluctant to take actions against Iraq and tried not to irritate Bagdad initially.

Changing Environment and International Setting

Nevertheless, Ankara would soon abandon this policy when it was understood that Baghdad would not agree to withdraw from Kuwait and the US would not let Saddam go away with what he had done. In an interview which was conducted on the days following the Crisis, Özal said that after getting direct contacts with the leaders of western states he realised that not only the Western world but also the states of the region wanted the issue to be solved by using all means if necessary. He pointed out that it was this state of affairs as well forced him in shaping his mind towards the Crisis and taking an active anti-Saddam policy.¹⁶ Indeed, as the US was declaring its determination to liberate Kuwait, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution asking for the withdrawal of Iraqi troops and imposing a complete economic embargo on Baghdad, on 6 August 1990.¹⁷ All of these meant that the invasion of Kuwait had begun to take a new shape. Above all, it became an international issue and the US declared its determination to restore the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait with the consent of the UN.¹⁸ Perhaps there were some western countries such as France and Germany dragging feet over the

¹² **Dünya**, 6 August 1990.

¹³ **Milliyet**, 4 August 1990.

¹⁴ **Interview**, İnan.

¹⁵ Aybet, "Turkey in its Geo-strategic Environment", p.120.

¹⁶ M. Barlas, **Turgut Özal'ın Anıları**, İstanbul: Birey, 2000, pp.125-131.

¹⁷ UN Security Council Resolution 661, S/RES/660 (1990), 6 August 1990.

¹⁸ See: UN Security Council Resolution 662, S/RES/660 (1990), 9 August 1990.

implementation of the Security Council resolutions, but it was becoming more and more obvious that the international society including the Soviet Union and Muslim Arab countries would support the UN and the US, while leaving Iraq alone. One of the most important points, which should be touched upon, is the fact that many in Turkey as much as in Iraq did not take into account the changing nature of international politics. From a broader perspective of international relations, as many would now agree that this invasion and the reaction of international society proved the end of bipolarity in world politics, which had been in application since the declaration of the Truman Doctrine in 1947. Indeed, Iraq gave an opportunity to the United States to make an acid test for its world leadership. Perhaps all the world believed that the Cold War was symbolically at the least collapsed with the fall of the Berlin Wall, but no body was sure about the shape of international relations to come within the context of the Soviet Union (or Russia) and the United States.

The world was indeed changing rapidly. All of these developments took a very short time. Not only Turkey but also all the world caught unprepared. In short, Iraq invades Kuwait on 2 August. Only three days later US President Bush declared invasion "will not stand." Next day, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia met with US Defence Minister and officially requested U.S. military assistance as soon as possible. Following the request, initial U.S. Air force fighter planes would arrive in Saudi Arabia and then international politics would change very rapidly from the point of indecision to a growing hard and harsh reaction against Saddam Husein.

Parallel with these developments, Iraq began to decrease the amount of oil, which was sent through the Turkish Pipeline.¹⁹ According to the official sources, Saddam had shut down one of the pipelines, while reducing the capacity of the other by 70 percent.²⁰ In the meantime, since the UN's resolutions were put into effect, as the Iraqi assets in the Western world were frozen Baghdad had been blockaded from all sides. Therefore, it is hardly possible to argue that had Ankara not decided to follow other countries, Turkey would have gained some economic benefits from the situation, as the opponents of Özal argued during the War.²¹ In fact when Turkey decided to implement the UN Resolutions concerning the Kuwait Crisis including the closure of the Pipeline, the international community left it to Ankara very little room for manoeuvre.

¹⁹ **Türkiye**, 7 August 1990.

²⁰ **Summary of World Broadcasting** (SWB), ME, 8 August 1990.

²¹ **Turkish Daily News**, 12 November 1990.

The Role of Leadership and the Meaning of Özalist Diplomacy

As for Özal's role, there are two important points, which should be analysed properly before anything else. The first one was related to the style of Özal's handling the Crisis. The other was concerned with the conventional patterns of Turkish foreign policy. Related with the first point, it may be possible to argue that Özal acted as if the only person taking decisions during the Crisis, without prior consultation with the government and the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this respect, the closure of the pipeline may be given as an example.²²

According to an opinion, such was a departure from Turkey's traditional foreign policy making patterns, since Özal acted against the tradition of Turkish presidents, a tradition that presidents had constitutionally symbolic powers in policy making. That is the first point. Yet Özal's action as president cannot be considered as the first example of its kind, because foreign policy in Turkey has been a field in which not many people but few played game. One of the players has been president and their roles in this field do not actually relate to what has been prescribed by constitutions. Nor was Özal in fact the first president in taking personal decisions in foreign policy. Apart from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü, Celal Bayar in the 1950s and Kenan Evren in the 1980s for example had made very similar decisions. Bayar's role in Turkey's decision to send army to Korea and Evren's role in Greece's return to the military wing to NATO are nothing but few instances illustrating certainly very well presidents' roles in critical times of Turkish foreign policy making.²³

Secondly if we look at the events as a whole, it can be said that the Turkish press has exaggerated Özal's role and this led many analysts to reach wrong conclusions. Some argues that Özal acted personally and did not listen to anybody. In addition, some thought that decisions related with the Crisis were not discussed enough.²⁴ It was an exaggeration itself that in fact falsifies the very argument, because one of the most publicly discussed issue in Turkish foreign policy was the Gulf Crisis. It was indeed so, thanks largely to Özal's attempts in order to open a way to establish private television stations.

²² For example see: Torumtay, **Org. Torumtay'ın Anıları**, pp.107-118. Torumtay, **Değişen Stratejilerin Odağında Türkiye**, pp.45-60. Also see: P. Robins, **Turkey and the Middle East**, London: Chatham House Papers, 1991, p.70.

²³ For this subject and related references particularly see: Calis, "The Turkish State's Identity", pp.135-155.

²⁴ For example see: P. Robins, "Turkish Policy and the Gulf Crisis, Adventurist or Dynamic", in C. Dodd (ed), **Turkish Foreign Policy: New Prospects**, Wistow: The Eothen Press, 1992, pp.70-87.

A lot of things can be said about this, but reminding a point would be enough: When compared other presidents it is a fact that Özal was one of the most criticised presidents in power.

In this respect, Özal's power was challenged not only by political and institutional opposition, but also by the Turkish official organisations and bureaucracy as well as intellectuals and the Turkish media.²⁵ It was a fact that when Özal announced the closure of the pipeline, many including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Head of General Staff appeared to be caught unawares.²⁶ But according to Kamran Inan, the then State Minister, the possibility of such a thing had already been discussed by the cabinet and by the Turkish National Security Council.²⁷ Therefore we can assume that Özal's announcement was not related with the substance of the decision, but its timing. In fact, Özal's power had been circumscribed by the cabinet, the NSC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and military substantially. Despite the fact that the Turkish Foreign Minister, Ali Bozer and the Chief of General Staff, Necip Torumtay resigned as a protest to Özal's way of handling the policy,²⁸ Özal could not act as he liked, because his decisions were always opposed by even his Motherland Party's government and the party's backbenchers as well. In this very point, many would agree that after becoming president Özal had to deal with a huge opposition from all sides and lost power substantially in parallel with losing control over his own party. When he died he was in fact a man alone living in Çankaya.²⁹

As a result, it is hardly possible to argue that Turkey's Gulf Crisis policy as a whole had been made single-handedly by Özal.³⁰ This is because, had the issue left the president, Özal would possibly have decided opening a front in the North and Turkish troops would have entered Northern Iraq. If the policy had been a policy of Özal, Turkey would have possibly occupied a

²⁵ For exaple see: M. Heper and S. Sancar, "Is Legal Bureaucracy a Prerequisite for a Rational productive Bureaucracy?", **Administration & Society**, Vol.30, No.2, May 1998, pp.143-164.

²⁶ Robins, **Turkey and Middle East**, p.70.

²⁷ **Interview**, İnan.

²⁸ On the resignations of Bozer and Torumtay see: Gökmen, **Özal Sendromu**, pp.184-196. Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis", pp.685-686. See also, interview with E. Vuralhan, in H. Cevizoglu, **Körfez Savaşı ve Özal Diplomasisi, Belgesel**, İstanbul: Form, 1991, pp.240-252. For Torumtay's own case see: Torumtay, **Org. Torumtay'ın Anıları**, pp.105-130.

²⁹ Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis", p.685.

³⁰ For a different view see also: S. Sayarı, "Turkey: The Changing Security Environment and The Gulf Crisis", **Middle East Journal**, Vol.46, no.1, Winter 1992.

part of northern Iraq including Mosul and Kirkuk.³¹ Even if we take these possibilities as merely speculation, Turkey should have sent troops to the Persian Gulf when the US prepared to launch an attack on Iraq, as many Muslim countries did.³²

Conventional Patterns: Internationalism

During the Crisis, if Turkey applied the UN resolutions, closed the Oil Pipeline and allowed the US and allied forces to use İncirlik Air base, these cannot be explained by the existence of Özal only. They cannot be seen as a departure from Turkey's conventional patterns of foreign policy either. Indeed, in order to understand Turkey's Second Gulf War policy, it would be insufficient to look at Ankara's policy towards neither Arab-Israeli nor Iraq-Iran conflicts as well as its relations with Iraq in the 1980s. Turkish foreign policy needs to be evaluated as a whole before reaching conclusions about the so-called new direction of Turkish foreign policy. Particularly since the 1950s, there are several examples displaying a fact that Turkey could take an active part and even implement risky policies if the problems concerned the Western world and international community, as it has been pointed out at the outset of the section. Its recognition of Israel, its participation in the Baghdad Pact and its Korean War record can be reminded here as examples. As for the most controversial decision of Turkey, namely allowing the US to use Turkish bases against Iraq during the Crisis, it is not a single case either. For example, the US used these bases in 1967 for Lebanon,³³ in 1970 for Jordan, in 1979 for Iran³⁴ and 1982 for Lebanon to help its citizens in the region.³⁵ Despite their so-called "humanitarian purposes", all of these permissions as well had contained serious risks, because they could have provoked at the least some terrorist organisations against Turkey, let alone their potential to affect Turkey's image in official circles.

During the Gulf Crisis, after the involvement of the US and the UN, Turkey did not show any hesitation when taking decisions against Iraq, since Turkish decision-makers thought that they would eventually strengthen their relations with the Western world. In fact when we look at the driving forces behind Turkey's Gulf War policy we can see that it had

³¹ Gökmen, **Özal Sendromu**, pp.187-188.

³² For Özal's opinion see: **SWB**, ME, 22 January 1991.

³³ H. Hubel, "Turkey and the Crisis in the Middle East", in S. Taşhan and A. Karaosmanoğlu, **Middle East, Turkey and the Atlantic Alliance**, Ankara: Foreign Policy Institute, 1987, p.112.

³⁴ Robins, **Turkey and Middle East**, p.69.

³⁵ Aybet, "Turkey's Geo-strategic", p.103.

also been conducted in accordance with Turkey's conventional patterns of foreign policy. It was not a secret affair that Özal's decisions aimed to change Turkey's image in the West, by giving more than what the West could expect from Turkey.³⁶ Indeed such was not a groundless attempt in a period as the end of the Cold War badly hit Turkey's position in international politics. Although some harshly criticised his decisions, not only Özal but also many people including Kemalist intellectuals and retired generals were in favour of implementing the UN decisions and acting together with the international community.³⁷

Perhaps some were anxious to be seen as the bastion of the US in the region, but none excluding Islamists and very few social democrat intellectuals and politicians such as Mümtaz Soysal and Bülent Ecevit did not argue to stand against the decisions of the UN and the idea of acting together with the international community. But they all had appeared that they were against Özal.³⁸ For example, Erdal İnönü, Head of Social Democrat People's Party was so much against Özal's decisions that he rejected the president's invitation even to discuss the problem at Çankaya where a meeting was to be held by leading opposition figures.³⁹ But the very same İnönü had in the meantime proposed to set up an international army against Saddam⁴⁰ and to call an international embargo on Iraq,⁴¹ at the very beginning of the Crisis.

However, what Özal did in fact was nothing more than what the UN resolutions prescribed and the international community approved. In this respect, it can be said that there was an implicit agreement among leading figures of the Turkish politics. Similarly, it was certain that many could not afford to loose such an opportunity that would document Turkey's importance in the region. By giving full support and even by encouraging the US for a military intervention, Özal attempted doing nothing but to make this expectation a reality and it is certain that Özal reached that objective.⁴² Indeed, since the Gulf Crisis, many politicians and analysts in

³⁶ **Interview**, İnan.

³⁷ For example, Kenan Evren, Erdal İnönü, Süleyman Demirel all argued similar things. For Evren, **Milliyet**, 8 August 1990. For İnönü, **Hürriyet**, 7 August 1990. For Demirel, **Ter-cuman**, 19 August 1990.

³⁸ See: A. K. Baharcicek, **The Impact of Recent Major Changes in International Politics for Turkey's Security Interests**, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Nottingham University, Nottingham, 1993, pp.192-193.

³⁹ **Türkiye**, 11 August 1990.

⁴⁰ **Hürriyet**, 7 August 1990.

⁴¹ **Güneş**, 7 August 1990.

⁴² For Özal's role see: Kuniholm, "Turkey and the West", pp.36-37.

the world have come to the same conclusion: Turkey's geopolitical position is important as much as in the past. For example, President Bush would not hesitate to declare that "as the whole world knows, the international coalition could not have achieved the liberation of Kuwait without Turkey's vital contribution."⁴³

Conventional Patterns: Westernism

Turkey's Gulf War policy was important not only for reminding Turkey's geopolitical position in the region, but also important for economic, politic and diplomatic fields. Although there are different figures, it is a fact that one of the biggest losers of the war has been the Turkish economy.⁴⁴ But even if Özal did not seem to be very enthusiastic to support the international coalition, the crisis would again have affected the economy reversely. Apart from the negative effects of the War for Turkey's tourism revenues for example, the regional economy halted with the start of military operations and the UN sanctions made impossible to use the Iraqi oil, not only Iraq but also Kuwait and Saudi markets closed to Turkish products.⁴⁵ By taking side with the US and the international community, with his famous businessman approach, Özal expected to claim Turkey's loss from the Western powers and oil-rich Arab states after the War. As such, he declared that "this is the most profitable business deal of my life. It is the first time I am making big profits with so little work. We are betting one, getting three".⁴⁶

Perhaps Turkey did not obtain as much as he calculated, but it was able to compensate some of them and gained some economic benefit from its cooperation with the US. On the one hand, in addition to international organisations, developed countries such as Japan and Germany and the oil rich states such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia offered some financial credits in order to compensate Turkey's loses.⁴⁷ On the other, as Washington was raising Turkish textile quotas, Turkey was supplied \$8 billion worth of military equipment by the Western powers.⁴⁸

⁴³ President Bush's Speech at Ankara Esenboğa Airport, 20 July 1991, annexed in **Turkish Review**, Vol.5, Autumn 1991.

⁴⁴ Turkish financial loses had been calculated between \$15 billions and \$20 billions within a year after the invasion of Kuwait. **Newspot**, 8 August 1991. According to official figures, the Gulf Crisis cost Turkey \$40 billions within 4 years. **Newspot**, 19 August 1994.

⁴⁵ B.R. Kuniholm, "Turkey and the West", **Foreign Affairs**, Vol.70, no.2, Spring 1991, p.37.
⁴⁶ **Sabah**, 16 January 1990.

⁴⁷ **Cumhuriyet**, 2 October 1990.

⁴⁸ Robins, **Turkey and Middle East**, p.71. Kuniholm, "Turkey and the West", p.37.

On the diplomatic front, some officials in Turkey expected a kind of Korean War effect from the Gulf crisis. As in the Korean war, many thought that by taking side with the West Turkey showed its fidelity and proved itself as a reliable ally to the Western countries.⁴⁹ Particularly Turkish diplomats had the impression that their chance of admission to the EC as a full member would increase as a result of the role that Ankara played in the Crisis.⁵⁰ Just five days later from the invasion of Kuwait, a Turkish newspaper was headlined as follows: "The Message of Full Membership from the EC to Ankara: Turkey Should Prove its Europeanness". According to newspaper, "if Turkey argues that it is a European country, then it should join the West against Iraq".⁵¹ It is nearly impossible to check whom said such a thing from the EC, but it is safe to note here that such was in fact a precise reflection of the mood among Turkish diplomats and westernised elites.

Even some expected from Washington to put pressures on the EC to approach Turkey's membership application with sympathy.⁵² Whether or not Turkey asked for a mediation role from the USA officially is a difficult subject to judge from available source, but it is certain that Washington read at the least the lips of the Turkish authorities. In his visit to Turkey in 1991, President Bush said that the US would support Turkey's efforts to join the EC.⁵³ According to the President, Turkey deserved the EC membership not only because its cooperation with the West, but also the economic and political developments and changes which the Turks materialised.⁵⁴

Perhaps Washington appeared to be ready for such a mediation role, but it was uncertain that the EC would accept it, because the EC appeared to be less enthusiastic to appreciate Turkey's role in the region than the USA, in addition to the problems between the EC and the USA which were growing very complex. Despite the fact that Britain had in the meantime attempted to activate Turkey's relations with the EC, because the only EC country evaluated Turkey's role like the USA,⁵⁵ the EC as a whole did not show any light in the direction of establishing better relations with Turkey until when it was decided to start the process of customs union. Although it was declared that the EC would help Turkey financially, neither had this promise been fulfilled nor had the hurdle of Greece been overcome in the

⁴⁹ Interviews, İnan and Erkmen.

⁵⁰ Robins, **Turkey and Middle East**, p.71.

⁵¹ **Güneş**, 7 August 1990.

⁵² **The independent**, 13 August 1990.

⁵³ **Newspot**, 25 July 1991.

⁵⁴ **Newspot**, 1 August 1991.

⁵⁵ See: M. Thatcher, **The Downing Street Years**, London: Harper Collins, 1993.

meantime. As such, in a Turkey-EEC Joint Parliamentary Committee, as Greek delegation was trying to put barriers to the development of the relations, the EC would continue to criticise Turkey's Cyprus policy, human rights record and democratisation process.⁵⁶

However, it was Özal himself who had attempted to revitalise Turkey's relations with the EC, which is a fact that many analysts have neglected, by asserting that Özal preferred the US instead of the EC. As he was visiting the EC countries, the President made several speeches to defend Turkey's case for integration with the Community in the West. At a Western European Union (WEU) meeting in Paris, having pointed out Turkey's role in the Gulf, he went on to speak that Turkey with its secular democracy and a free market economy could constitute an example to the countries of the region on the condition that the West would show understanding towards Turkey. "But more important than this", said he, "Turkey should be considered as a natural member of the EC as well as other European Organisations", because, he declared, it was a principle for Turkish foreign policy to take part in all European movements.⁵⁷ To the President, "the EC and the WEU would not reach their natural and logical limits without Turkey."⁵⁸

As I have indicated above, Turkish authorities saw the Gulf Crisis as an opportunity to persuade the EC for its membership as in the case of the Korean War for the NATO in the 1950s. Like Adnan Menderes did after the outbreak of the Korean war, Özal and the Akbulut government in the 1990s intensified their efforts to establish closer relations with the EC following the invasion of the Kuwait. As such, we can repeat what we have seen in the chapter three related with Turkey's NATO membership. First of all, by diplomatic initiatives, Turkey requested fairer treatment from the Community. In his letter to Prime Ministers of the EC countries in March 1991 soon after the Gulf war, Özal said that

Turkey, which since the creation of the Republic has adopted the values of the international community was successful in applying them, applied to the EC in 1987 for full membership. However, in spite of ... positive developments [in Turkish economy and political structure] no satisfactory reply to the application was received, nor a satisfactory reply to the demand to revitalise partnership relations... As you know, during the Gulf crisis, Turkey proved once again her devotion to common values at the

⁵⁶ **Interview**, İnan. See also: **Newspot**, 25 July 1991.

⁵⁷ **Newspot**, 12 June 1991. For the speech see: President Özal's Speech at the WEU Meeting in Paris annexed in **Turkish Review**, no.24, Summer 1991.

⁵⁸ **Newspot**, 6 June 1991.

cost of serious economic and political risks... Turkey wants extensive cultural, political, financial, and commercial cooperation [with the Community].. These days now the war in the Gulf has ended and efforts are being made to achieve regional peace, the Community has not strengthened Turkey-EC relations as was intended. This is causing uneasiness in Turkish public opinion and leading us to doubt the intentions of the EC.⁵⁹

In short, Özal wanted to develop at the least Turkey's relations with the EC by using its credit coming from the Gulf War. Perhaps Turkey would see some positive impacts of these efforts in the long run, but the Gulf War could not help Turkey as much as the Korean war did in the 1950s. This is because, the effects of the Gulf war were very different from those of the Korean war at least in two respects. Firstly, whereas the Korean forced the Western countries to reconsider the structure of the Western security system based on the NATO framework, the same thing cannot be said about the Gulf war in relation with the EC. Instead of forcing the EC to change its structure in a way allowing Turkey to join it, it can be said that the war urged the Community to strengthen its original structure and to complete its integration process at once. The Korean war deepened the separation of the East and West and warned the possibility of a hot war between rival blocks. However, the Gulf war showed the end of possibility of global conflicts in a way that would affect the European countries directly. On the other hand, however, the War showed that inclusion of Turkey to the Community would bring it to the front of a region torn between conflicts. There seems no immediate reason for the EC countries to deal with such a situation. Of course, the Gulf war demonstrated Turkey's importance for the security of the West as a whole in the region, but the EC has had the impression that since Turkey is a NATO member and a US ally,⁶⁰ it will continue to contribute to western security and interests in any case.

A second different effect was related to Turkey's image problem in the Western world. It is a well known fact that the Korean War changed Turkey's image in the US substantially. The US military circles could not refrain themselves from declaring Turkish soldiers to be "the bravest men of the World". American public opinion, which was affected by some anti-Turkish lobbies, shifted sharply to the favour of Turkey's NATO membership. Mainly thanks to the fact, Turkey was able to become a member of NATO and then participated in the Western defence projects actively. But it was hardly possible to say the same thing for the Gulf Crisis as far as Turkey's image in the EC is concerned. Perhaps official circles had

⁵⁹ **Newspot**, 7 March 1991.

⁶⁰ See also: Aybet, "Turkey's Geo-strategic", p.97.

appreciated Turkey's role during the Crisis as much as their counterparts did in the States, but this would not much help Turkey to convince neither EU's bureaucrats in the Brussels nor ordinary men in the European streets. According to a poll which was made in November 1989 on the opinion of EC citizens about "others" in the definition of their identity, as Islam was chosen as "the other religion",⁶¹ the Turks were indicated as "the other nationality" with an equal percentage to Africans.⁶² In another poll conducted after the Crisis, Turkey was named by the members of the European Parliament⁶³ and the European public opinion as the least favoured country amongst applicants to be accepted by the Community.⁶⁴

However, it should be noted here that despite the above mentioned facts, Turkey's emergence as a "potential regional power" after the end of the Cold War has not remained unnoticed by the West including the EC. This would positively affect Turkey's relations with the Community. But it should also be kept in mind that the factor that has changed the Community's attitude towards Turkey is not only its contribution to the Allied powers during the War. The factor is in fact that its great potential to play more important roles in the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Central Asia as well as in the Middle East has been understood by the Community. On the way to the EU's Helsinki summit in December 1999 when Turkey was declared as a country which has the right to be a candidate for the EU membership, Turkey's contribution to the Allied Powers during the Crisis has played a role but not much more than US pressure on the Brussels indeed.

Conclusion

The emergence of the new factors since the end of Cold War in particular and their implications for Turkish foreign policy can be a subject

⁶¹ Commission of the European Communities, **Eurobarometer: Public Opinion in the European Community, Special, Racism and Xenophobia**, Brussels, November 1989, p.39. (Question: When you hear about people of another religion, whom do you think?) Islam, 40%. Nearest to it, Jehova's Witness, 12% and Jews, 10%.

⁶² **Ibid.**, p.37. (Question: When you hear about people of another nationality, whom do you think of?). Turks, North Africans and Other Europeans, 18% as EC average. 63% of Germans and 75% of Dutch think of the Turks.

⁶³ **The European**, 1-3 February 1991.

⁶⁴ Commission of the European Communities, **Eurobarometer: Public Opinion in the European Community**, No.39, June 1993, p.A38. (Question: For each of the following countries [namely, Austria, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, Malta, Cyprus and Turkey], are you in favour or not of them becoming part of the European Community, in the near future?). For only Turkey, majority of sample says not to be in favour.

of another article. But as this analysis has clearly shown, Turkey's Gulf Crisis policy did not contradict the conventional Turkish foreign policy patterns, contrary to the assertions mentioned at the outset of the article. First of all, the invasion of Kuwait did not remain an inter-Arabs issue soon after the interference of the USA. From this point, not only Özal but all people in the World realised that the Western world leading by Washington did not let Saddam go away with what he had done. In addition, the USA did not study hard to make the issue an internationalised one, because there was not a considerable opposition to the demands of the USA with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. In this respect, there left a little room for a country like Turkey, which had followed the western world and supported international community for years. In addition, the crisis provided Turkey with an opportunity to show itself and to be listened in the World at a time when not only the EC but many in the World began thinking that Turkey lost its geopolitical importance. From this point, Turkey's diplomatic attractions at the beginning of the 1990s resemble very much those of the 1950s. In some respects, Turkey's middle eastern policies in the 1990s can be seen a reincarnation of the 1950s. The positive impacts of the two crises (Korean and Gulf) on Turkish-American relations cannot be oversimplified. Followings both of these crises, this relationship experienced a golden period.

It may be argued that Özalist diplomacy in the 1990s did not succeed as much as the Korean policy of Bayar in the 1950s, for example, in terms of Turkey's foreign policy objectives mainly concerning its participation in the European organisations. That is, while Bayar secured for Turkey a seat in NATO, Özal could not persuade EU member countries, but Turkey's Gulf policy opened a new way to say something about Turkey's integration with the EC. Should Turkey have been invited in the Helsinki Summit, it is certain that this Özalist Gulf policy did make its own contribution in the last resort. When all of this taken into account, it is not impossible to say that Özalist diplomacy towards the Gulf Crisis was not an action that contradicts but confirms Turkey's conventional foreign policy understanding indeed.

Nor had personalities or leadership such as Özal changed the main direction of Turkey's international relations in general and its Middle Eastern policies in particular. When we look at Turkish foreign policy from a broader perspective, the case of the Second Gulf Crisis would not be taken as an example showing a shift from Turkey's traditional foreign policy understanding. It may be said that Özal's role in this particular policy created an exception to this general trend in style at the least. Yet, this is also a point which ought to be made after a proper analysis only. As for the role of Özal, it can be seen as a new ring of Turkish presidential diplomatic chain indeed. In this respect, Özal resembles much more to presidents who took part in decision making process actively. Of course, as many would agree,

Özal's power was more circumscribed by many organisations such as the NSC and the Turkish General Staff which active presidents did not face before as clear as Özal did.

ÖZET

Bu makalede, Türk dış politikasının geleneksel kalıpları ile Özal'ın damgasını taşıdığı iddia edilen Türkiye'nin Körfez Savaşı politikası ele alınmış ve Özal'ın dış politika kalıplarını değiştirdiğine ilişkin tartışmaya mütevazı bir katkıda bulunulmaya çalışılmıştır. Sonuçta ise Özal'ın Körfez Krizi döneminde oynadığı rolün önemli ve fakat abartılı olduğu belirtilmiş, özellikle de karar alma mekanizmasında yer alan etkili kurumların rollerine dikkat çekilmiştir.

