

TURKEY AND THE OIC: 1984-1992

MAHMUT BALI AYKAN

This paper analyzes the intensification of Turkey's relations with the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in stages from 1984 to the present (Summer of 1992) from an historical perspective.

What were the objectives Turkey expected to achieve from this relationship? What roles has Turkey assumed in the OIC to achieve them, and how consistent have these roles been with Turkey's alliance ties with the West? To what degree, if any, have the Turks been able to achieve these objectives and what were the reasons for their successes and failures? These are the main questions that will be considered in this analysis.

It is the hope of the author that the analysis that will be carried out in this work, aside from exploring an important aspect of Turkey's relations with the Islamic World, will also contribute to a realistic assessment of the capacity Turkey is currently assumed to have by the West¹, as a Western-oriented Islamic country, to play a stabilizing role in her increasingly volatile neighbourhood in the post-Cold War era.

I. Turkey's Relations With the OIC Prior to 1984: The Period of 1969 - 1980: The Turkish Role in OIC Activities Develops From a Reserved Stance Toward Active Participation

From its participation in the Rabat Summit of 1969 -the first international Islamic meeting with a political agenda that Republic of the Turkey had ever attended since its establishment in 1923- to the time of the

¹ See note 69. See also "Star of Islam: A Survey of Turkey" in *The Economist*, December 14-20 1991, p. 56 and on.

Fourth Islamic Summit held in Casablanca in 1984 -the first OIC summit that Turkey attended at the highest level- the Republic of Turkey's ties with the OIC gradually increased.² Turkey's intensifying relations with the OIC in this time frame may be analyzed in three periods: 1969-1973, 1974-1980 and 1980-1983.

The Turkish decision to attend the Rabat Conference in September 1969 came as part of the implementation of Turkey's new foreign policy the principles and objectives of which emerged around the mid-1960s.³ It was prompted chiefly by Turkey's need to seek international support for her Cyprus cause. It had seemed impossible to elicit such support through the perpetuation of her exclusive alliance ties with the West of the 1950s -already tangibly damaged, anyway, by the reluctance of the United States to support Turkey on her Cyprus cause in 1964.⁴ These ties appeared to have left Turkey virtually isolated in the Third World.⁵ The main objective of Turkey's prestige in the eyes of both the Islamic countries and the West, not necessarily in the sense of being able to control the "minds and actions" of these countries in their mutual relations, as Democrat Party Administrations appeared to have attempted in the 1950s, but to create an atmosphere of intimacy between Turkey and these countries at the minimum level that would enable the former to be esteemed and consulted on various matters and its contributions to regional politics, no matter how modest to be sought and respected. Other objectives which appeared to be thought of by the Turks as either the result of or complementary to the objective of prestige were: eliciting the support of the Islamic World for Turkey's international causes, like Cyprus; contributing to regional stability, as required by the "Peace at Home, Peace Abroad" policy; and developing relations with the Islamic countries in all possible fields without any prejudice to Turkey's special ties with the West. All these objectives were supposed to be achieved through a strict compliance with the principle of neutrality, meaning non-interference

²For a detailed analysis of the evolution of modern Turkey's foreign policy concerning international Islamic conference since its establishment in 1923 until 1992, see the author's expected book (New York, Vantage Press): "The OIC and Islam in Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Islamic World, 1960-1992: The Nature of Deviation from the Kemalist Heritage".

³For these principles and objectives see, Hamit Batu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy", *T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı Belleteni*: (The Bulletin of the Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry), [Hereafter cited as *Belleten*] No. 6 (March 1965), pp. 21-5.

⁴See A.Ü. Ülman and R.H. Dekmejian, "Changing Patterns in Turkish Foreign Policy: 1959-1967," *Orbis*, 11 (Fall 1967), p. 775.

⁵One revealing example of this isolation came when twenty-one Asian and African countries sent a cable of support to Syria in its conflict with Turkey on October 23, 1957. See *New York Times*, October 24, 1957, p. 8.

in both Islamic countries' dealings with each other and their relations with the Western countries. Turkey's special ties with the West were not considered an obstacle; rather they were considered to be instruments making Turkey an "example" to be emulated by the Islamic countries in re-designing their internal and foreign policies.

During and following her attendance in Rabat, Turkey maintained an uncommitted posture toward the OIC activities in the early 1970s. During the Rabat Summit, for example, it was represented not by the Turkish President, although he had been invited, but by the Foreign Minister. Similarly, at the First session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in March 1970, it was the Under-Secretary of the Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry, who represented Turkey, did not participate in deliberations. On this occasion, Turkey carefully refrained from committing itself to regular participation in the upcoming meetings, although it did not oppose the idea of establishing a General Secretariat for the Organization.⁶ It also refrained from approving the Charter of the Organization which indicated a "resolution" on the part of the participants "... to preserve Islamic spiritual, ethical, social and economic values" and to "...promote Islamic solidarity among member states".⁷ This was on the grounds that the Charter in this form appeared to contravene both the secular Turkish constitution, which established a clear-cut separation of religious and temporal affairs, and Turkey's continuing international status as a member of the Western community and an ally in the Western alliance.⁸ As a response to the radical tone of the Declarations of the OIC Conference with respect both the Palestinian question as a political question and the policy to be pursued against Israel, Turkey announced its approval of these Declarations "in so far as [they were] compatible with the UN Resolutions that Turkey has approved as well as with the fundamental principles of Turkish foreign policy".⁹

A notable shift in Turkey's role in the OIC meetings from the early reserved stance toward a more active participation occurred in the period of 1974-1980. This was the outcome of certain internal and external factors, chiefly economic in nature. The Turkish economy faced difficulties in the

⁶See the text of the speech made by the head of the Turkish delegation to the Jeddah Conference Mr. Orhan Eralp in *Bellekten*, No. 66 (March 1970), pp. 44-45.

⁷See the Charter of the OIC in *Organization of the Islamic Conference*, (An unpublished document released by the OIC), pp. 4-5.

⁸See *Türkiye'nin İslâm Konferansı ile İlişkileri* (Turkey's Relations with the OIC) (An unpublished document released by the Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry), p. 16.

⁹See *Bellekten*, No. 66 (March, 1970), pp. 27-28.

first half of the 1970s, for various reasons including increased oil prices in the wake of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the emerging crisis in relations between Turkey and the EEC.¹⁰ The migration of Turkish workers to Europe came to a virtual standstill as of 1974, with a parallel decline in their remittances. Thus, Turkey became more interested in developing economic ties with the Islamic world than it had been in the 1960s. The main political incentive for Turkey in developing its relations with the Islamic world in this period was the increased importance, in Turkish eyes, of mustering international support to the Cyprus issue in the wake of the Turkish military intervention on that island in July 1974. Following this operation, Turkey's special alliance with the United States received another blow, and one more serious than that of 1964, when in February 1975 the latter imposed an arms embargo on Turkey to punish it for its action in Cyprus. Although the religious conservative National Salvation Party (NSP), a partner in coalition governments formed after 1973, also contributed to the development of Turkey's relations with the Islamic world and the OIC, this party's actual influence on the process of rapprochement remained limited.¹¹

Turkey's active participation in OIC meetings and its cooperation with this organization in the 1974-1980 period were manifested in both political and economic matters. At the level of political co-operation, for example, Turkey's active support for the Arab cause in the Arab-Israeli conflict became evident most notably in Turkey's changing policy on the Palestinian issue. In stark contrast to its previous position, Turkey openly recognized for the first time the "right" of the people of Palestine to "national independence and sovereignty". This led to the eventual opening of a PLO office in Ankara in 1979. Turkey also supported Arab positions -including the equation of Zionism with racism- in international fora.¹²

At the level of economic co-operation, in contrast to its attitude of the 1960s, Turkey supported projects for the establishment of a common market among the Islamic countries, no longer finding Turkey's participation in such undertakings incompatible with its links with the EEC.¹³ It began

¹⁰See Turkey's specific problems with the EEC in the mid-1970's in **Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Western Europe Series, February 11, 1976, p. T3.** [Hereafter cited as **FBIS**. Hereafter, all **FBIS** citations are **Western Europe Series** unless otherwise indicated.]

¹¹See the interview with the NSP leader Mr. Necmeddin Erbakan in **Cumhuriyet, August 2, 1979, p. 6.**

¹²See **Keesing's Contemporary Archives: 1975, pp. 27487-27488.**

¹³Concerning the Turkish position on this subject in the 1960s see Ferenc N. Vali, **Bridge Across the Bosphorus: The Foreign Policy of Turkey**, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971, p. 342.

contributing to the OIC budget in 1974 and participated in the capital of the Islamic Development Bank in 1975, becoming a full member of this bank.

The Istanbul Conference of May 1976, which was the first OIC meeting in Turkey, constituted a landmark in the swiftly developing relations between Turkey and the OIC. At this conference, the Turkish government even went to the extent of declaring its decision to approve the charter of the OIC-conditional on subsequent ratification by the Turkish parliament, not realized to this day (Summer of 1992) and with the reservation that the approval would hold to the extent that the Charter in question was in conformity with the secular Turkish constitution.¹⁴ This was an important step in the direction of Turkey's full membership of the Organization.

Perhaps the most notable achievement of Turkey from its increasing economic and political cooperation with the OIC in the period of 1974-1980 was the support it elicited from the OIC on its Cyprus cause. The OIC recognized "the equality of rights of the two Cyprus communities... and their right to be heard in all international forums..." -the Turkish position- in a formal resolution passed, for the first time since the Rabat Conference, during the Istanbul Conference of Foreign Ministers in May 1976.¹⁵ The Istanbul Conference also agreed that the representatives of the Turkish Muslim community of Cyprus be invited to attend future meetings of the OIC as a "guest". Later, the Tenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Fez, Morocco, in May 1979, not only accepted the change of this "guest" status to that of "observer", but also called for the OIC members to support the Turkish Cypriot Community hurt by the economic embargo imposed on it by the Greek Cypriot leadership of the island.¹⁶

II. A New Momentum in Turkey's Relations With the OIC: 1980-83:

The period of 1980-1983 was a preparatory period for the subsequent one in which relations between Turkey and the OIC bloomed. The period of 1980-1983 saw the importance of the OIC in Turkish foreign policy grow. This fact was largely due to the improvement of the Turkish economy that came in the wake of the military intervention in Turkish politics on September 12, 1980, which brought internal unity and stability into the politically chaotic atmosphere prevailing in Turkey. The increase in Turkish

For the change in the Turkish position on the same subject in the 1970s, see FBIS, October 4, 1975, p. T1.

¹⁴See *Milliyet*, May 11, 1976, p. 7.

¹⁵See *Declarations and Resolutions of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs Conferences (1969-1981)*. (An unpublished document released by the OIC), p. 168.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, See also *Ibid.*, p. 409.

exports, brought about by the successful implementation of the economic resolution of January 1980, which was based on domestic production and export promotion, made the markets of the Islamic countries more important than ever for the Turks.

From the increasing economic relations with the Islamic states, the Turks expected to derive certain economic benefits.¹⁷ They wanted to find business opportunities for Turkish firms and to relieve the unemployment problem -exacerbated by the reluctance of the Western European States to continue admitting Turkish workers and their even seeking to return the ones they had- by sending Turkish workers to Arab states. They wanted to close or reduce Turkey's balance of foreign payments deficits -for which trade with the EEC could be of no help- caused by the high cost of oil. Finally, the Turks hoped to gain access to Arab petro-dollars, as an alternative to the credits they had been unable to obtain in sufficient amounts from Western sources, in order to engage in joint economic activities and to carry out many cooperative development projects.

The OIC provided Turkey with a useful framework in which progress could be made to achieve all these economic objectives. Beginning in 1980, Turkey took major leading initiatives in the OIC in the implementation of the "General Agreement for Economic, Commercial and Technical Cooperation" for the Islamic countries approved by the Eighth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in 1977. It hosted, for example, a high-level Islamic meeting in Ankara in November 1980 which drafted a common strategy for economic cooperation among the Islamic countries, called the "Plan for Action". The "Plan for Action" constituted the framework for the goal of economic integration and the eventual establishment of an Islamic Common Market. It was adopted by the Third Islamic Summit Conference held in Taif, Saudi Arabia, in January 1982, an occasion hailed by the officials of the OIC as "the turning point in the history of the OIC as far as economic cooperation among member states is concerned".¹⁸

Turkey's economic and commercial relations with the Islamic states grew unprecedentedly in the main fields of trade, capital and investments and contracting in the period between 1980 and 1984 along the lines suggested in the "Plan for Action." This situation, and particularly the increasing share of Islamic countries in Turkey's total exports -from 22.51 percent in 1980 in 1980 to 45.79 percent in 1983- paralleling a notable decrease of the share of

¹⁷See the interview with the Turkish Foreign Minister İler Türkmen in *Milliyet Aktüalite*, 28 March, 1982, p. 22.

¹⁸See Abul Khair Mohammed Farooq, "Islamic Common Market -An Ultimate Goal", *Information Report*, Vol. 5, July/October 1989, pp. 10-11.

Western countries, even led to arguments in the West that the Turkish economy was shifting orientation to the Islamic countries.¹⁹

At the level of political co-operation Turkey's growing rapprochement with the OIC manifested itself most notably again in the continuing Turkish support for the Arab cause. A revealing example of such support came in December 1980 when the Turks reduced diplomatic relations with Israel from the level of chargé d'affaires to a minimum level, i.e. the level of second secretary, in response to the Israeli decision of July to make Jerusalem Israel's capital. Even though this Turkish decision prompted allegations to the contrary²⁰, no aspect of Turkey's relations with the OIC really suggested serious compromise in Turkey's overall ties with the West. At the ideological level, the much-publicized "Rabitat Affair" concerning Turkish religious officials stationed outside Turkey being on the payroll of the Saudi-based religious organization Rabitat Al-Islam -a guest at OIC meetings- after the September 1980 military intervention, in accordance with a government directive bearing the signatures of Head of State Kenan Evren and the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, did not turn out to be anything other than a case of a benign, albeit inexcusable, neglect.²¹ In the political sphere, Turkish foreign policy concerning OIC resolutions dealing with matters involving relations between the West and Islamic countries could best be described as a policy of balanced, benevolent neutrality. It was characterized by attempts to avoid close association with American policies on these matters while refraining from condemning or totally rejecting them, as the resolutions did.²²

¹⁹See Turkey's export figures in *Ibid.*, April 1989, Vol. 5, p. 13. For an example of the Western arguments mentioned, see *Joint Publications Research Service*, West Europe Report, January 19, 1982, p. 134. [Hereafter cited as JPRS. Hereafter, all JPRS citations are West Europe Reports unless otherwise indicated.]

²⁰Certain critics in Turkey maintained that Turkey's increasing relations with the OIC in the first half of the 1980s were a plan envisaged by Turkey's new military régime to "re-structure Turkey on the basis of religion" in order to be able to fight against communism more effectively. See Çetin Yetkin, "Aftermath of September 12 and Muslim Fundamentalism", in *Milliyet*, May 2, 1990, p. 11.

²¹For extensive coverage and opposing viewpoints on this affair, see *FBIS*, March 23, 1987, p. T1; *Cumhuriyet*, March 21, 1987, p. 2; Kenan Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları* (Memoirs of Kenan Evren), Vol. 6, İstanbul, Milliyet Yayınları, 1992, pp. 64-82; Uğur Mumcu, *Rabita*, II. Basım, İstanbul, Tekin Yayınevi, 1987, *passim*.

²²For an example of such a Turkish attitude, concerning the issue of whether the "Fez Plan" of 1982 or Reagan's Peace Plan of 1982 deserved to be supported for Middle East peace, see *Milliyet*, October 7, 1982, pp. 1, 9. For an example of the OIC position on the same subject, see Mecca Declaration in *FBIS*, Middle East Series, 29 January, 1981, p. A15. See

As far as the members of the OIC were concerned, the impact of their international orientation as members of the Non-Aligned group also affected their attitudes on the Cyprus issue, in a way that prevented full cooperation between the two sides, on this issue. Thus, they did not recognize the self-proclaimed Turkish state in Northern Cyprus in November 1983, either individually or collectively. Rather ironically, U.S. diplomatic pressure on the OIC member countries also played a role here. Nevertheless, they continued to support Turkey's stance in favour of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation of Cyprus based on the equality of the two communities at Islamic Conferences, considering such a support as the minimum requirement of good relations with Turkey. Despite its total isolation in the world as the only country recognizing the new Turkish state in Cyprus, Turkey did not react sharply to this, but expressed the belief that this recognition would come in time.²³ This mild Turkish response combined with the understanding the OIC members in general displayed about the way Turkey's policies on the Islamic issues mentioned above fell short of satisfying them fully signalled the determination of both sides to keep together in cognizance of common interests binding them.

Indeed, despite the existence of these differences, the importance of political co-operation increased in the eyes of the Turks and the members of the OIC in general in the period of 1980-83, even though this may not have been as visibly demonstrated as was the case with economic cooperation between them in the same period. Certain regional events that took place in this period, like the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the revolution in Iran that began in the same year, and the Iran-Iraq war that began in September 1980, made the members of the OIC and Turkey genuinely more concerned with the sources of instability in the region other than Arab-Israeli conflict. The OIC could be utilized as an international platform in which forces be joined to contain and defuse such crises.

From the perspective of the members of the OIC, who were willing to cooperate with Turkey to this end, this country was an important partner due to its important regional status stemming from its stable régime, developing economy, military might and status as an important strategic ally

also the Turkish position on the policy to be pursued against Israel as distinct from that of the OIC in JPRS, November 10, 1980, pp. 52-56; FBIS, Middle East Series, January 27, 1981, p. A19; *Ibid.*, Middle East Series, January 28, 1981, p. A22.

²³See, FBIS, November 29, 1983, p. T1.

of the West in a critical region for Western security.²⁴ From Turkey's perspective, the OIC provided a useful means through which it could boost its prestige, make its presence felt in the region in a positive way, contribute better to the maintenance of peace and stability in the region through combined efforts of other Islamic countries and not damage its neutral status in doing this because of collaboration with other Islamic states sponsored by the OIC. A case in point was Turkey's actual participation as a member in the "Islamic Peace Committee" established by the OIC with a mission of "seeking ways and means of bringing about a peaceful, just and lasting solution" to the Iran-Iraq conflict. Without the framework of such an OIC mission, Turkey's actual unilateral contacts with Iran and Iraq to induce them to stop fighting each other would have been bound to remain futile, since both sides refused any Turkish advice to this effect and Turkey, afraid of being accused by the parties of taking sides, was not in a position to mediate.²⁵

Of course, in terms of its effectiveness in reaching its ultimate objectives in a reasonably short time, the actual capacity of such OIC missions could validly be questioned. As far as the Iran-Iraq war was concerned, for example, it was impossible for the diplomatic efforts of the Islamic Peace Committee to bring about peace in view of the determination of both warring parties to try their chances at the battlefield first. Besides, Iran deeply mistrusted even the "Islamic Peace Committee" suspecting it of taking sides with Iraq something that potentially made the efforts of this committee bound to fail from the very beginning. This case typically demonstrated the helplessness of Islamic solidarity backed by Turkey when faced with radicalism.²⁶ Still, however, Turkish participation in it offered better prospects for success than Turkey acting alone, for the reasons mentioned above.

III. Turkey's "Active Bridge" Policy and the OIC in the Transition from the Cold War to the Post-Cold War Eras, 1984-1992:

The fourth Islamic Summit held in Casablanca in 1984 constituted a turning point in Turkey's economic and overall relations with the OIC. For one thing, Turkey was represented at the Summit by President Kenan Evren. This was the first time Turkey had participated in an Islamic meeting at the

²⁴Turkish President Evren felt Persian Gulf Sheikdoms "pinned their hopes on Turkey" to bring the Iran-Iraq war to an end using its influence. Kenan Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları*, Vol. 4, pp. 429-32.

²⁵See *JPRS*, February 10, 1982, p. 76. See also *Ibid.*, March 17, 1982, p. 128.

²⁶See Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları*, Vol. 5, pp. 32-33.

highest level. Furthermore, the summit appointed the Turkish president to the Chairmanship of the Standing Committee on Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC), one of six specialized OIC committees the mandate of which involved "playing an eminent role in determining the policies and defining priorities in vital fields such as economy, commerce..."²⁷ Turkey, thus, assumed a leading role in efforts to achieve a fundamental goal set forth by the OIC charter, namely, "the consolidation of cooperation among member states". This confirmed the esteem with which it was treated in the OIC.

These novelties in the relations between Turkey and the OIC provoked speculation in the Western press as to whether they constituted the first signs of a foreign policy change on the part of the new Motherland Party Administration²⁸ which had come to power through general elections of November 1983. This association of the Motherland Party Administration with the new Turkish role at the Casablanca Summit was lent credibility by the Islamic credentials of the new Prime Minister Turgut Özal himself: his former association with the religious conservative National Salvation Party (NSP) and the existence in his Motherland Party of an Islamic wing with similar roots. It appeared, for a moment, that the Moslem fundamentalists, disguising themselves as religious conservatives, had at last succeeded in coming to power alone and immediately begun to shift the foreign policy orientation of the Republic toward the Moslem East.

Mr. Özal's NSP background did cause certain resemblances between his views and the NSP line on the importance of Islamic values in Turkish social life -a position not amounting to the advocacy of Shariat Law- and on the necessity of further developing economic and political relations between Turkey and the other Islamic states. However, certain characteristics of his approach to the subject of the overall importance of Islam for the foreign policy of the modern Turkish Republic distinguished it both from the well-known NSP line and from the typical Moslem fundamentalist view. Mr. Özal did not seem to be planning to enter into a political and military alliance with the Islamic world, as NSP leader Necmeddin Erbakan quite openly was, that would conflict with Turkey's NATO alliance.²⁹

²⁷ See Report of the Secretary General of OIC...on the functioning of the OIC subsidiary organs and specialized and affiliated institutions to the 19th Islam Conference of Foreign Ministers, Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, ICFM/19-90/ORG/D.5, (unpublished document released by the OIC), p. 8.

²⁸ See Christian Science Monitor, January 20, 1984, p. 9.

²⁹ Wall Street Journal, December 5, 1983, p. 28.

In various statements and interviews made with him in 1984 and 1985 Prime Minister Özal foresaw for Turkey a more active role than the one assumed by preceding Turkish governments for peace in the region, appearing intent on keeping this role within the boundaries permitted by the principles of Turkey's traditionally balanced relations with the Moslem East and the West. The main lines of this policy and the rationale behind it was clearly explained by Mr. Özal in these statements and interviews. He stated in January 1984: "...It is impossible for us to refrain from playing a role in the Middle East. [But] the extent of this role will be determined on the one hand by our general foreign policy, and on the other, by the way the situation develops in the region".³⁰ In various interviews made with him in February 1984 and December 1985, he explained that with its large population, military strength and growing economic strength Turkey would have to increase its involvement in regional politics; and with an increased stake, would have to contribute more to the preservation of peace in the region.³¹

In what context did the Motherland Party Administrations that ruled Turkey until late 1991 believe that partnership with the OIC could be expected to serve national objectives? Here, it must first be noted that despite their admittedly "too ambitious initial expectations" concerning specific projects which it was presumed would lead to the formation of the Islamic Common Market, the Turks had never seemed to have optimistic expectations concerning the creation of an Islamic Common Market when the projects in that direction were started in the early 1980s if only because of their awareness that the Islamic countries did not constitute a regional unit and pursued different policies in various fields.³² As far as Motherland Party Administrations were concerned, although they perceivedly brought a new emphasis to the economic aspects of Turkey's foreign relations in relative disregard of its political aspects, this new emphasis was not devoid of political considerations as certain domestic critics of the foreign policy they pursued contended.³³ In fact, these Administrations intended to use Turkey's foreign economic ties as an instrument, not only to internationalize the Turkish economy, something which they saw as essential for Turkey's economic development, but also to implement Atatürk's policy of "Peace at home, peace abroad" more effectively than it had been implemented in previous decades. The Motherland Party Administrations believed that in this era of what they perceived as growing interdependence at both regional and global levels, the resulting inevitable "economic co-operation [was] the best and most efficient method to achieve peace and stability" since it served to

³⁰FBIS, January 20, 1984, p. T2.

³¹Ibid., February 28, 1984, p. T2. See also JPRS, Near East Series, March 10, 1986, p. 119.

³²See *Milliyet Aktüalite*, March 28, 1982, p. 22.

³³See FBIS, September 2, 1986, p. T1.

ease political tensions.³⁴ From this perspective, both the assumption of a leading role in the establishment of COMCEC and the hosting of every COMCEC session from 1984 on -as would be the case- would provide Turkey with the opportunity to implement its existing peaceful policy in a most efficient manner through promoting, in the course of official contacts, mutual understanding between Turkey and Islamic countries.³⁵ Furthermore, the Motherland Party Administrations, despite Mr. Özal's religious outlook, continued like their predecessors, to view Turkey's relations with the OIC in general and COMCEC in particular as part of Turkey's traditional policy of prestige toward the Islamic world, without any prejudice to Turkey's position in the Western world.³⁶ This overall philosophy and strategy behind Turkey's active bridge policy was not abandoned by the successor of the Motherland Party Administrations, the liberal Right Way Party and Social Democrat Populist Party coalition which came to power as a result of the October 20, 1991 general elections in Turkey. Rather, it was embraced by them -although they publicly distanced themselves from the Motherland Party policies- within a new zeal under the new world conditions brought about by the end of Cold War and the following developments in Europe and the Soviet Union.

On the one hand, the fundamental international changes brought about by the post-Cold War era -most visibly the collapse of communist régimes, beginning in Eastern Europe- reflected positively on the circumstances of the Turkish Muslim minority in Bulgaria and caused the emergence of seven new Turkish (Turkic) Republic in an area once called the Soviet Union, thus boosting Turkey's morale and its overall international posture. On the other hand, however, they also created dangerous challenges to regional and world order as the communist glacier receded from the Balkans, East Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, leaving these areas in actual or potential turmoil created by various ethnic tensions. Surrounded by these increasingly unstable areas Turkey suddenly found itself threatened to an unprecedented degree since

³⁴See the inaugural address by the Turkish President Turgut Özal to the Twentieth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in: **Final Communiqué of the Twentieth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in İstanbul, Republic of Turkey, 4-8 August 1991**, ICFM/20-91/FC/FINAL, (unpublished document released by the OIC), p. 5.

³⁵See the statement by Mesut Yılmaz, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, at the Opening Ceremony of the Seventh Session of COMCEC, (İstanbul, October 8, 1991). Annex 3 to OIC/COMCEC/7-91/REP, **Report Seventh Session of the COMCEC, İstanbul, 6-9 October 1991**, Ankara, COMCEC Coordination Office, October 1991, pp. 111-112.

³⁶Author's interview with Mr. Aydan Karahan, Head of the COMCEC Coordination Office, at the COMCEC Coordination Office in Ankara on October 21, 1991.

the Second World War. Thus came to the fore the global dimension in Turkish foreign policy that had previously been hidden behind the global competition between the two superpowers in cold-war years. As we will later mention, already during the Kuwait crisis of August 1990, when the United Nations seemed to emerge as the global instrument of peace and order, no longer hindered by superpower competition, Turkey, under Turgut Özal's presidency and a Motherland Party Administration, had not hesitated to side with that organization against Iraq in an unprecedented manner which in many eyes called its traditional benevolent neutrality policy toward Islamic states into question. The new coalition government, led by Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, made this new globalism, characterized by Turkey's active involvement in international economic and political cooperation schemes, the central tenet of the Turkish foreign policy in the new era of international politics. Mr. Demirel stated in June 1992 that the post-Cold War era in world politics was characterized by two opposing trends of integration and disintegration and that Turkey was "one of the active constructors of the new world order," a role that "history conferred upon her" by virtue of her geographical location, regional and international responsibilities and the variety of her cultural and historical ties.³⁷ On the same occasion, he also stated that in such a capacity Turkey was "ready and willing" to contribute to the formation of new regional integration schemes on the belief, reminiscent of that of his predecessors, that such integration schemes would contribute to the solution of regional crises through promoting peaceful dialogue.

From this global perspective, the OIC, as an international forum of 46 Islamic states constituting about one-third of the UN, could, in the eyes of Turkey's new administrators, serve Turkey's national objectives as an important part of global economic and political co-operation schemes. In the economic realm, the new coalition government seemed by no means willing to abandon the objective of securing Turkey's membership in the EC, despite increasingly discouraging prospects stemming from the uncertainties of post-Cold War Europe.³⁸ However, if regionalism were to supplant and undermine globalism, with Europe, North America and East Asia emerging as externally-closed trading blocks locking out the developing countries of Africa, Asia and the Middle East, including Turkey, the OIC, with its efforts towards securing free trade among Islamic states, could prove to be one of the alternative means of helping Turkey's economic development, in one capacity or another. In the political, and more specifically security realm, as the UN became in the eyes of Primer Demirel the "[Security] umbrella of the new

³⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, July 1, 1992 p. 19.

³⁸ See *Hürriyet*, May 6, 1992, p. 6. In contrast to his previous views, Turkish President Özal acknowledged that the collapse of the Iron Curtain, creating new rivals to Turkey, made this country's future membership in the EC "either very difficult or impossible". *Ibid.*, December 10, 1991, p. 14.

world", the OIC could complement both by activating or encouraging it to deal with the regional crises upsetting world peace and by contributing to its enforcement mechanisms.³⁹ As we will analyze next, the new coalition government appeared to be determined to perpetuate Turkey's contribution to the OIC's playing these functions in the economic and political realms in the post-Cold War era by perpetuating its predecessor's active bridge policy toward the OIC, a policy which consisted of playing moderating, moderate and energizing roles in that organization.

IV. Implementation of Turkey's "Active Bridge" Policy: 1984-1992:

Turkey's moderating and moderate roles as a member of the OIC emerged as by-products of its steadfast implementation of the multilateral policy that was characterized by its continuously balancing its commitments as an ally of the West and a friend of the Islamic states, regardless of their foreign policy orientations and roles.

In its capacity as a moderator, Turkey has tried to promote moderation on various Middle Eastern issues involving the US -like the Arab-Israeli conflict and the US-Iran conflict of 1985- by carrying messages between the parties and encouraging them to adopt moderate positions.⁴⁰ In an interview in August 1987, Turkish Foreign Minister Halefoğlu clarified this Turkish role. "We believe," he said, "...we are in a position to rightly interpret words [uttered by a statesman of a regional country] that might create misunderstandings [on the part of the statesmen of other regional countries] and to explain some attitudes [of statesman of a country/ies to other country/ies] in their genuine meanings... They [parties in the region] supply us with information. They want us to explain these respects to the other party, They all appear content with our [current] role."⁴¹

Turkish governments established since 1984 have also taken moderate positions concerning US policies toward Islamic countries and Israel, a role that stood out as an "example" to be emulated by the other OIC members. Turkey carried out this role by keeping any criticism of the United States which it considered justified within the boundaries of moderation, which often contrasted with the radical tone of the OIC resolutions passed on such subjects, and by refusing to cut off its overall contacts with Israel to please particularly the Arab members of the OIC. In the case of the United States imposition of economic sanctions against Libya in 1985, for example,

³⁹*Ibid.*, June 18, 1992, p. 25.

⁴⁰See, for example, FBIS, April 17, 1985, p. T2. See also *Ibid.*, May 29, 1985, p. T2.

⁴¹*Milliyet*, August 22, 1987. p. 7.

Turkey's criticism of the American action only as a "method" in combatting international terrorism was moderate in nature as opposed to the resolution passed on this issue by the OIC Summit of January 1987 "denouncing" the "intent" of the US resolution in question as "economic oppression for political reasons".⁴² Concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict, despite the conservative credentials of the Özal Administration, the diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel, far from being cut off as called for by OIC resolutions, was quietly restored in 1985-1986 to its level of prior to 1980, i.e., chargé d'affaires, to be upgraded to the level of Ambassador later - simultaneously with the likewise upgrading Turkey's relations with the PLO - under the new coalition government decision taken in December 1991 to encourage the ongoing Middle East Peace Conference between the Arabs and Israelis. The fact that the Turks did not upgrade the level of diplomatic representation with the PLO to the level of Ambassador until December 1991, when the new coalition government made the relevant decision to that effect, seems to be due basically to the continuing Turkish concern not to damage ties with the West, particularly the Jewish lobby in the US Congress that could be influential there in increasing American aid to Turkey.⁴³

Turkish foreign policy during the Gulf crisis of August 1990 and in its aftermath does not necessarily constitute an exception to the balanced approach of Motherland Party administrations towards the Moslem East and the West. It is true that during the Gulf crisis of August 1990, the Motherland Party, Government, acting under the guiding Presidency of Turgut Özal, unprecedentedly allowed the US to use air bases in Turkey as a stage for bombing operations inside Iraq, and cooperated with the West in various other ways, which will be mentioned later. Likewise, it was the first time Turkey had given permission, for a multinational military force to be established on its soil when this came about in the aftermath of the Gulf war in January-February 1991. What is more, Turkey participated in this force itself. Yet, in the opinion of this author, it was too early to take these moves as indications that Turkey was abandoning its traditional balanced -"bridge"-role and the caution it required -in avoiding close association with the US- in favor of siding with the West exclusively on Persian Gulf security issues as in the 1950s, as recently claimed in the Turkish press.⁴⁴ It appears to be the case that during the Gulf crisis of 1990-91, the Turks felt no position of

⁴²See text of "Some Resolutions" adopted by the Fifth Islamic Summit Conference of January 1987 in FBIS, Middle East Series, January 30 1987, p. A15.

⁴³See *Milliyet*, September 1, 1987, p. 12. The new coalition government also abstained in the UN General Assembly vote of December 1991 which repealed the UN General Assembly resolution of November 10, 1975 describing zionism as "a form of racism and racial discrimination" while OIC still supports this resolution. See *Cumhuriyet*, December 18, 1991, p. 8.

⁴⁴See, for example, Sedat Ergin in *Hürriyet*, March 25, 1991, p. 10.

neutrality could be taken, when the choice was between joining the UN economic embargo and cooperating with the West in the process, or not joining it, which meant supporting Iraqi aggression against Kuwait that had been condemned worldwide.⁴⁵ Also, there has been no indication on the part of the new coalition government, the Turkish Foreign Ministry or the Turkish Armed Forces that Turkey's future cooperation with the US in the Persian Gulf will develop at the expense of Turkey's traditional good and cautious relations with the regional states. All these sources of Turkish foreign policy appear deeply worried about the future consequences of the continuing anti-Saddam Hussein policies of the West to bring about the dismemberment of Iraq, seriously upsetting regional stability including Turkey's own.⁴⁶

V. Turkey's Energizing Role in Promoting Political and Economic Co-operation in the OIC:

Playing this role, Turkey took the following initiatives and made the following contributions to the efforts of the Islamic world to ensure security in the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war and the Gulf crisis of August 1990 and its aftermath. In the course of his increasing contacts with the warring parties and various Persian Gulf states in 1987, Prime Minister Özal urged the Persian Gulf states to establish a "consultation mechanism" among themselves to prevent the outbreak of future hostilities. He simultaneously expressed Turkey's readiness to assume a proper role in the "coordination" of this mechanism.⁴⁷ Later on, during the Seventeenth Islamic Conference decided to establish a group of "five eminent personalities" including a Turkish Ambassador to study the question of confidence and security-building measures in the region.⁴⁸ After the entry into force of a cease-fire between Iran and Iraq in August 1988, Turkey agreed to participate in a UN multinational military observer force, consisting of contingents from five member countries of the OIC set up to oversee this ceasefire.⁴⁹

With the beginning of a new Gulf crisis in August 1990 following Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, Turkey unprecedentedly cooperated with the

⁴⁵See the statement by Turkish President Özal to this effect, *Ibid.*, October 2, p. 17.

⁴⁶See *Milliyet*, August 24, 1992, p. 11. See also, *Ibid.*, September 4, 1992, p. 17.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, August 4, 1987, p. 11.

⁴⁸See *Cumhuriyet*, March 26, 1988, pp. 8-12.

⁴⁹See *Report of Dr. Hamid Al Qabid, Secretary General of the OIC, to the Eighteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Riyadh (S. Arabia), 13-16 March 1989, ICFM/18-89/S6/REP*, (unpublished document released by the OIC), p. 18.

West and the Islamic countries within the framework of the UN decision to ensure the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait and restore the pre-crisis status quo in the region. Accordingly, she not only imposed an economic embargo on Iraq, cutting off the Turkish-Iraqi oil pipeline -vital for Iraqi oil exports- but also allowed the US to use air bases in Turkey as a stage for bombing operations inside Iraq and massed troops on Iraqi border -thus tying down a part of the Iraqi army to the North. These actions facilitated the speedy final victory of the allies against Iraq.⁵⁰

In the aftermath of the Gulf crisis of August 1990, faced with the problem of the thirty-thousand Kurdish refugees fleeing from the Iraqi massacre of Kurds in Northern Iraq, President Özal played a decisive role in "persuading" the initially reluctant President Bush, through telephone diplomacy, to establish "security zones" in Northern Iraq under the supervision of a UN peace keeping force, so as to protect the Kurds from the wrath of the Iraqi army.⁵¹ In order to continue providing a "security umbrella" for the Kurds in Northern Iraq following the withdrawal of the US and allied military forces from Iraq, the Turkish Government made a decision in July 1991 to permit the establishment of a 2-3000 man "multinational force" -with Turkish participation- at the İncirlik and Silopi bases on Turkish soil.⁵²

The new Demirel government continued these bold policies of its predecessors with a new zeal. Through the invitation extended by Turkish President Özal and Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin to the members of the OIC in May 1992, Turkey assumed a leading role in the Islamic world in bringing about the meeting of the Fifth Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Turkey in June 1992 to examine the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina -the newly independent Republic of former Yugoslavia- where Serbian forces were committing indiscriminate violence against the Muslim and Croat populations.⁵³ Later, in August 1992, acting as the "Chairman of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers", Turkey appealed the UN for an extraordinary convention of the UN General Assembly to discuss measures to put an end to the "ethnic cleansing" operation allegedly undertaken by the Serbs against the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵⁴

These initiatives of the coalition Government -which were not limited to the situation in Bosnia but also concerned the ethnic tensions between the

⁵⁰See *Hürriyet*, March 24, 1991, p. 9.

⁵¹See *Ibid.*, April 25, 1991, p. 11. See also *Ibid.*, April 24, 1991, p. 12.

⁵²*Ibid.*, July 5, 1991, p. 12. See also *Milliyet*, July 6, 1991, p. 9.

⁵³See *Hürriyet*, May 30, 1992, p. 19.

⁵⁴See *Cumhuriyet*, August 22, 1992, p. 9.

newly-independent former Soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan-symbolized Turkey's continuing determination to promote Islamic solidarity in the service of regional stability and of the perceived Turkish national interest of protecting the rights of Turkish communities in places -in this case Azerbaijan- where communist régimes previously reigned. This policy was a continuation of the Turkish efforts that began in the mid-1980s to secure the concern of the OIC in protecting the rights of Turkish minorities living in Bulgaria and Greece, an issue to be dwelled upon briefly later.

In the sphere of economic cooperation, in carrying out its chairmanship of COMCEC, the Turkish leadership made efforts to contribute to the development by COMCEC of a realistic approach to the goal of economic cooperation among Islamic states, pragmatically giving the goal of enhancing intra-Islamic trade top priority among the projects indicated in the Plan For Action.⁵⁵ The Turkish leadership also made efforts to provide COMCEC with an institutional identity, i.e., meeting regularly with a statute and rules of procedure.⁵⁶ The new coalition government, parallel to its support of the membership of the newly-independent Turkish and Islamic countries of the Balkans and Central Asia in the OIC as well as in the Economic Cooperation Organization [ECO] -originally established by Turkey, Iran and Pakistan in July 1964 under the name of Regional Cooperation for Development [RCD]-, also sought the expansion of COMCEC, accepting the membership of these countries, and appealed to Islamic capital to make joint investments there.⁵⁷ The hope behind this policy apparently was that all these attempts at regional integration would first be successful in themselves and then complement each other in the future, generating peaceful solutions to regional crises through dialogue.⁵⁸

VI. The OIC and the Objectives of Turkey's Active Bridge Policy, 1984-1992: A Balance Sheet

To what extent, if any, have Turkey's moderating, moderate and energizing roles as a member of the OIC served Turkey's foreign policy objectives of promoting Turkey's prestige in the eyes of the Western and Islamic countries, promoting regional stability, winning international support for its international causes, and contributing to its economic development?

⁵⁵See note 36.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷See *Cumhuriyet*, May 6, 1992, p. 7.

⁵⁸See *Ibid.*, July 1, 1992, p. 19.

With the notable exception of the cooperation with the Islamic countries and the West during the Kuwait crisis of August 1990, the real Turkish contribution to the maintenance of stability in the Persian Gulf region through its membership in the OIC remained very limited indeed. Turkey's participation in the group of "five eminent personalities" established by the Seventeenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers meeting of March 1988 to take charge of drafting confidence and security-building measures in the Persian Gulf could be considered a case in point. This Turkish participation may be seen as an important diplomatic achievement in Turkey's search for prestige in the region. Indeed, it appeared to confirm that Islamic countries considered Turkey an important regional state whose views over the question of maintaining peace and order in the region carried a certain weight in their eyes. However, when it came down to actually leading the Islamic countries to adopt certain principles designed to promote security in the region -as is the case with Turkey's role in COMCEC, to be analyzed next- Turkish participation carried no weight beyond its symbolic value. It turned out that the report prepared by the group did not attract the same interest among the members of the OIC as it did in Turkey. There has been no serious discussion of the report among the OIC members.⁵⁹

What were the reasons for Turkey's inability to lead the Islamic countries in promoting regional security? One reason was related to the deep political divisions of the Islamic countries of the region among themselves on this subject, a gulf that was further widened by the atmosphere of mutual mistrust. As previously mentioned in connection with the activities of the Islamic Peace Committee, rather than serving as an instrument to enhance Islamic solidarity in political co-operation- in accordance with its charter- the OIC has been a mirror reflecting the political disunity among Islamic states, particularly after the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war in September 1980 onward. The subsequent invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in August 1990 further contributed to this disunity. This situation had a very discouraging impact on Turkish leaders even in carrying out Turkey's traditional role of acting as a moderator. In the case of the Iran-Iraq war, for example, faced with the radicalism and intransigence of Khomeini, Turkish President Kenan Evren felt he had to turn down the requests of Islamic states for him to go to Tehran at the head of the Islamic Peace Committee and contact Khomeini personally to persuade him to stop Iran's struggle with Iraq, for fear of not succeeding in the job -a fear shared by Turkish Foreign Ministry circles- and of causing the "Turkey's prestige" in the eyes of the Islamic states to "suffer" through this failure.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Author's interview with Bahattin Gürsöz, Chairman of the OIC Department in the Turkish Foreign Affairs in Ankara on October 15, 1991.

⁶⁰ Evren, Kenan Evren'in Anıları, Vol. 5, pp. 32-3, 62.

Another reason for Turkey's inability stemmed from the difference between the non-aligned international orientation of other regional Islamic countries and that of Turkey as an ally of the West. This difference manifested itself perhaps most notably in conjunction with Iran's view of establishing an Islamic Defense Pact that would keep the US outside the security considerations in the region.⁶¹ Turkey did not rule out cooperation with the US -even though this would be balanced with the requirements of maintaining friendly relations with the regional states- to ensure stability in the region. This difference also manifested itself notably when the previously-mentioned report, prepared by the joint group including Turkey, proposed the establishment of an Islamic World Court that would pass judgements concerning regional crises using Islamic principles. This was a scheme that was ideologically unacceptable to secular Turkey.

Yet another reason stemmed from the existence of certain disputes between Turkey and its Arab Islamic neighbours like the issues of the Turkish military operations against Kurdish terrorist bases in Northern Iraq taking place since 1983 and the utilization of the waters of the Tigris and the Euphrates, a matter involving Turkey, Syria and Iraq. To the present, the Arab world has continued to display solidarity against Turkey concerning these issues on various occasions.⁶² It appears that behind the instances of this solidarity lay the historical Arab mistrust of the Turks suspected of having inherited the domineering instinct of their Ottoman ancestors.⁶³ In view of such factors it seems no surprise that there appeared no sign on the part of the regional Islamic states even to invite Turkey to participate in the regional security schemes conceived of to be set up after the Kuwait crisis of 1990, let alone to seek her leadership in that respect.

As far as winning international support for international causes is concerned, Turkey's international orientation as an ally of the West continued to limit the support provided by the OIC resolutions on Cyprus issue, just as it served as one of the factors hindering co-operation between Turkey and the regional states to promote regional stability, even though to a lesser extent. Thus, despite their continued support for Turkey's position on the Cyprus issue at Islamic Conferences -as revealingly indicated by the supportive mention in the Final Communiqué of the Islamic Conference of Foreign

⁶¹ See *Hürriyet*, August 14, 1991, p. 12.

⁶² For example, see *Cumhuriyet*, June 1, 1990 p. 3. See also *Milliyet*, August 24, 1991, p. 9.

⁶³ The existence of such an Arab feeling towards the Turks, negatively influencing their foreign relations is readily acknowledged by scholars and diplomats on both sides. See Murat Bardakçı in "Uneasy Friends: The Arabs and Us" in *Hürriyet*, August 21, 1989, p. 5. and *Ibid.*, August 22 1989, p. 5.

Ministers held in İstanbul in August 1991⁶⁴ of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (649) of March 1990 which upheld Turkey's position on the Cyprus issue- the Islamic countries have not abandoned their policy of not recognizing the Turkish state in Northern Cyprus. During the above-mentioned OIC meeting in İstanbul in August 1991, the Turkish Cypriot state applied for full membership, but the OIC did not, at least for now, consent, despite the personal efforts of the Turkish Foreign Minister Sefa Giray.⁶⁵ Besides, they also withheld their economic and financial support from the Turkish Cypriot State.

However, limited as it was, the support provided by the OIC on the Cyprus issue was still pleasing to Turkey. Despite the reluctance to grant full membership to Turkish Cypriot state, the "Turkish community of Cyprus" was granted representation in all organs of the OIC and the right to participate in all activities of the OIC at the İstanbul meeting of August 1991. The Turks considered this step as a political victory, characterizing it as "unnamed full membership".⁶⁶ Also, the same Conference decided, for the first time, "to call on and urge the member states to increase and expand their relations with the Turkish Muslim Community of Cyprus in all fields and in particular in the fields of trade, tourism, information, investment and sports".⁶⁷ The Conference also decided, again for the first time, to "request the Islamic Development Bank to undertake in consultation with the Turkish Muslim Community of Cyprus a comprehensive study on their economic development".⁶⁸ The "reaffirmation" of these resolutions and declaration of the İstanbul meeting on Cyprus by the Sixth Islamic Summit held in Dakar (Senegal) in December 1991, at the highest level, despite the intensive efforts of the pro-Cyprus lobby headed by the Algerian, Egyptian and Palestinian delegations,⁶⁹ crowned the diplomatic victory achieved by the Turks in the previous İstanbul meeting of August 1991.

⁶⁴ See **Resolutions on the Political Legal and Information Affairs of Foreign Ministers Meeting held in İstanbul, Republic of Turkey, on 4-8 August, 1991.** ECFM/20-91/RES.FINAL, (unpublished document released by the OIC), pp. 77-79.

⁶⁵ For comments on this, See *Hürriyet*, August 5, 1991, p. 10; *Ibid.*, August 4, 1991, p. 12.

⁶⁶ See *Cumhuriyet*, August 4, 1991, pp. 1, 15. See also *Ibid.*, August 6, 1991, pp. 1, 15 and *Ibid.*, August 10, 1991, p. 8.

⁶⁷ See note 63

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ See **Final Communiqué of the Sixth Islamic Summit Conference, Dakar, Republic of Senegal, (9-11 December 1991)**, IS/6-91/FC/FINAL, unpublished document released by the OIC, p. 15. See also FBIS, Near East and South Asia, December 9, 1991, p. 24.

The emergence in the 1980s of other national causes similar to Cyprus, i.e., the issues of the oppression of the Turkish minorities in Bulgaria and Western Thrace in Greece, and the international support Turkey has been able to gather on them from the OIC -again despite its Western orientation- served to reaffirm the importance of Turkey's OIC membership in Turkish eyes. The OIC's solidarity with the Turkish minorities living in these places, a solidarity that was firmly mentioned in the OIC resolutions though not decisive in bringing about the cessation of the violation of their rights by the governments concerned, proved a welcome international moral support for the Turks of a kind that had been conspicuously lacking in the 1950s.⁷⁰

Despite its limiting effect on the development of full political cooperation between Turkey and other Islamic members of the OIC, Turkey's alliance ties with the West served the Turkish objective of raising prestige -in the previously mentioned meaning of the term- in the eyes of both Islamic countries and the West. These countries have seen Turkey, a member of both NATO and the OIC, as a window, a channel of communications opening in both directions, as well as a bulwark against attempts -originating inside or outside the region- to overthrow the status quo in the Middle East. From the perspective of the US and its Western European allies, impressed by the Turkish performance during the Kuwait crisis of 1990, Turkey's dedication to democracy and a free market economy could serve to increase Western influence in the Islamic world through Turkey's bilateral and multilateral connections with the regional Islamic states within the framework of the OIC. Again from their perspective, Turkey could fulfill the same function -again as a member of the OIC- in the region extending from the Balkans to the Caucasus and from the Middle East to Asia in the post-Cold War period if it was prepared to continue and expand its current active policy in a grand strategy covering these areas. The Turkish and Western press is full of reports

⁷⁰See Report and Resolutions on the Political and Information Affairs Adopted by the Sixteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Fez, Kingdom of Morocco (6-10 January, 1986), ICFM/16-86/PIL/REP/RES (FIN), (unpublished document released by the OIC), pp. 106-108. See also Final Communique of the Twentieth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey, 4-8 August 1991, ICFM/20-91/FC/FINAL, (unpublished document released by the OIC), p. 28. On the issue of the plight of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, certain states with special ties to Bulgaria and the Eastern Bloc, i.e. Algeria, Cameroon, Libya, Palestine, Syria and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen expressed reservations in the OIC. This the Turks received with understanding. See FBIS, January 16, 1984, p. T3.

and high-level Western statements to that effect.⁷¹ From the perspective of the Islamic states, regardless of the degree of displeasure with they viewed Turkey's regional policy and its Western connections, Iran, the PLO, Syria and even Iraq after the Gulf War of 1991, have felt free, repeatedly up to the present, to request help from Turkey to make connections with the West and each other on their behalf as a diplomatic bridge, on matters concerning them.⁷²

From the standpoint of Turkey's foreign policy objectives what was important in these events was not so much whether they provided Turkey with the opportunity to make substantial contributions to regional stability by influencing the other countries, which is difficult to measure precisely anyway, or whether Turkey had the capacity to make such contributions and was willing to use it, to which questions our previous analysis does not give fully affirmative answers, but the fact that they showed that Turkey held a certain degree of esteem in the eyes particularly of Islamic states regardless of the orientations of their foreign policy. It appears that this esteem stems from a degree of intimacy between Turkey and the Islamic states -whatever the reasons that motivated it- that would have been unthinkable in the confrontational atmosphere of the 1950s. The mere existence of this intimacy could be regarded as the confirmation of the original Turkish expectations behind Turkey's new foreign policy which, as previously mentioned, has never been so naive as to expect to control the minds and actions of other countries. In the opinion of this author, in view of the ever-present, deep-rooted, intricate problems and national-ethnic animosities of Middle Eastern politics, Turkey, as a member and ally of the Western community, could hardly aim to achieve more, today and in the future.

VII. The Extraordinary OIC Meeting of Foreign Ministers of June 1992 on Bosnia-Herzegovina:

Being different from all these international causes of Turkey, Turkey's energizing role within the OIC concerning the issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina had special implications for the global aspects of Turkey's active bridge special policy pursued in the post-Cold War era. Even though the issues of Cyprus and the plight of the Turkish minorities in Bulgaria and Greece all had more or less implications for the so-called "new international order" of the post-Cold War era, the ethnic conflict among the Serbs, Muslims and Croats of the newly independent state of Bosnia-Herzegovina has been treated in international platforms as one of the most important test cases for the post-Cold War world order, together with the Gulf crisis of August 1990.

⁷¹See, for example, *Milliyet*, November 7, 1991, p. 13. See also Sami Kohen in *Ibid.*, July 2, 1992, p. 13. and *Ibid.*, February 17, 1992, p. 15.

⁷²See, for example, *Ibid.*, March 19 1991, p. 16. See also *Ibid.*, March 21, 1991, p. 14 and *Ibid.*, March 8, 1988, p. 9.

For one thing, the way in which the great majority of the members of the OIC- 39 out of 46- heeded the invitation of Turkey to attend -at short notice- the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in İstanbul in June 1992, with the Turkish Foreign Minister acting as the "chairman", came as confirmation of Turkey's prestige among the members of the OIC. According to a Turkish news commentator, this came as a sign that that country was emerging as "a rival" vis-a-vis Saudi Arabia and Iran for a "leadership" position in the OIC.⁷³ Aside from the very doubtful questions of whether any Islamic country, Arab or non-Arab, could have the overall capacity to lead the OIC in terms of promoting overall economic and political cooperation among its members -and not only in terms of leading the OIC to take certain positions on certain issues of world affairs, like the issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina- and whether Turkey is capable of and willing to undertake such a role, a subject on which our discussion will continue, it could be said that Turkey's global objectives in the post-Cold War era were reasonably well -served by its position in the OIC and the position taken by the OIC on the issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

It is true that the İstanbul meeting established no "Islamic Peace Force" to enforce peace in the region, where Turkey considered diplomacy to show no signs of working. However, in "urging" the UN Security Council to use military force against the Serbs if non-military measures did not suffice to stop their "ethnic cleansing" operation against Muslims and in calling upon the OIC member states "to provide full support to the United Nations" in these endeavors as well as calling for the establishment of a Contact Group to "follow" and "review" developments surrounding the issue, the meeting endorsed Turkey's views without amendment.⁷⁴ Furthermore, Turkey's appeal, as the "Chairman of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers", for the UN General Assembly to hold an extraordinary meeting on Bosnia-Herzegovina was successful and the subsequent meeting of the General Assembly produced a decision, which, to the pleasure of the Turks, also recommended military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁷⁵ These developments and the invitation which Turkey received from the West to attend the London Conference to be met later in August 1992 do discuss the issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in its capacity as "a Balkan country and Chairman of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers"⁷⁶ could be

⁷³See Kürşat Akyol in *Cumhuriyet*, June 20, 1992, p. 8.

⁷⁴See **Final Communiqué of the Fifth Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, İstanbul, Republic of Turkey, (17-18 June 1992)**, Ex-ICFM/5-92/FC (Final), (unpublished document released by the OIC), pp. 4-6.

⁷⁵See *Hürriyet*, August 26 1992, p. 14.

⁷⁶*Milliyet*, August 23, 1992, p. 7.

regarded as another indication of Turkey's prestige in the eyes of the West due to its OIC connection, which in this case apparently combined with and strengthened its overall geopolitical value.

Going back to the declarations of the Extraordinary OIC meeting in İstanbul, particularly important from the point of view of the foreign policy objectives of Turkey was the way the OIC, not merely lent support to the UN to tackle an important security problem, but also pushed it to fulfill its historic mission of making militarily contributions to overall security in the post-Cold War world -a mission the UN seemed unwilling at the time to carry out-supplementing thus the efforts of Turkey to the same effect. Whether or not the great powers of the West that made up the bulk of the UN Security Council and that met in London in August 1992 were ready to activate the UN to enable it to fulfil this historic mission was of course another question, made all the more doubtful by the subsequent inaction of both. Yet, it seems important to note that because of its own limited capabilities (not only materially, but also because of the persisting image of post-Ottoman imperialism outside Turkey)⁷⁷ Turkey could not hope to do anything more than to activate international public opinion -as was the case with the Bulgarian and Greek issues-to put pressure on the UN Security Council to handle the problem. Actually, it is this limited capability of Turkey in fulfilling its self-imposed mission as one of the leading countries constructing the "new world order" that makes the often reported Western and domestic views of Turkey as a regional super-power that might be dedicated to the revival of the Ottoman imperial legacy⁷⁸ rather unrealistic.

The extraordinary İstanbul meeting of the OIC also served Turkey's objectives in the post-Cold War era reasonably well by admitting the Republic of Turkmenistan to full membership of the OIC and by expressing its "solidarity" with the Republic of Azerbaijan and appealing to Armenia "...to review and renounce its aggressive policy of expansionism" as perceivedly revealed by the occupation by Armenian forces of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Lachin district and the border regions of Nakhichevan; all internationally-recognized Azerbaijani territories.⁷⁹ With Turkmenistan's

⁷⁷While writing these lines, it became certain that NATO countries did not favor a Turkish contingent being sent to Bosnia-Herzegovina together with troops from other NATO countries to support the UN humanitarian mission there. This decision was made in view of Turkey's historical ties to this region. On this subject, including Turkish reaction to it, see Ertuğrul Özkök in *Hürriyet*, September 16, 1992, p. 21.

⁷⁸See, for example, *Milliyet*, August 11, 1992, p. 10. See also *Ibid.*, August 6, 1992, p. 6.

⁷⁹**Final Communiqué of the Fifth Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, İstanbul, 17-18 June 1992, p. 9**

admission into the OIC, coming after the admission of Azerbaijan during the Dakar Summit of 1991, Turkey's political weight in the Arab-dominated OIC increased presumably while the OIC's declaration of "solidarity" with Azerbaijan in its conflict with Armenia fulfilled the aim behind Turkey's ongoing international efforts to bring the moral pressure of international opinion to bear on Armenia.

It was obviously true that in addition to the mere passage of resolutions defining the issues of the Islamic world, the readiness of the OIC members, as Turkey actually was, to take coordinated joint action that would not exclude military measures integrated with international collective security-the UN- for the solution of regional problems like Bosnia-Herzegovina would be desirable from the perspective of Turkey's global objectives. Yet, at the time the Extraordinary OIC conference convened in Istanbul, this Organization still did not seem to have got very far down the road to the wide-ranging cooperation and coordination in all fields among its members insistently called for in its Charter. In fact, let alone drawing up for themselves clear-cut objectives and an effective strategy -even on the most sensitive issue to all, the Arab-Israeli conflict- as an initial stage in attempting such cooperation and coordination, they did not appear ready even to come together to discuss their problems yet. This appearance was conveyed by the division created among the Arabs, during the Dakar summit of December 1991 over whether or not to mention *Jihad* against Israel in the Final Communiqué, while eleven Arab leaders failed to show up for the same meeting at all, reportedly in protest at the PLO backing of Iraq during the Kuwait crisis of 1990.⁸⁰

VIII. Economic Cooperation Between Turkey and the OIC the COMCEC Experience:

By giving Turkey the Chairmanship of COMCEC, the members of the OIC showed a notable willingness to be led by that country in promoting economic cooperation among themselves, a willingness that was conspicuously lacking, as we have seen, concerning political and security issues. However, Turkey's actual effectiveness in this area also remained limited by certain important factors and structural problems that impeded the satisfactory implementation of the Plan For Action within the framework of the OIC.⁸¹ Among these factors were "catastrophic" financial limitations,

⁸⁰See FBIS, near East and South Asia, December 11, 1991, pp. 24-25. See also *Ibid.*, December 12, 1991, p. 13.

⁸¹The level of intra-Islamic trade, accounting for about 10 percent of Islamic countries' foreign trade in 1991, still falls far short of the awowedly desired level. For this and all the problems impeding the implementation of the Plan for Action, see Annex 4 to OIC/COMCEC/7-91/REP in **Report**,

lack of data and information and the slow response of the member states. The structural problems were the fact that the Islamic countries did not constitute a regional unit and pursued different policies, the non-complementary nature of their economies and the inadequacy of their infrastructures; all these have proved very difficult to overcome so as to achieve the realization of the ultimate objective of economic cooperation among Islamic countries: the Islamic Common Market.

What specific benefits has Turkey so far been able to draw from the COMCEC experience? Whatever the chances of achieving the targets for economic cooperation among the Islamic countries within the framework of COMCEC were, it appears that the hosting of that committee greatly helped Turkey in its efforts to develop its relations with the Islamic countries at the bilateral level. In this respect, the various ministerial level meetings that have been held so far under the umbrella of COMCEC and the COMCEC follow-up meetings have all served as international forums where Turkish views with them and seek their support on political matters as well as economic issues of special importance to Turkey. For example, the Secretary General of the OIC, Dr. Hamid al-Gabid's appeal to the member states, during the Fifth meeting of COMCEC in İstanbul in September 1989, to extend moral and material support to the Turks expelled from Bulgaria -even though non-discussion of political matters is a principle in COMCEC meetings- was an important international moral boost for Turkey at a time when it badly needed it. COMCEC meetings particularly the various ministerial - level meetings, have also served as a meeting ground for Turkish businessmen who have been able to contact the statesmen of Islamic states there to obtain first-hand information leading to business connections in Islamic countries. It appears, however, that many Turkish businessmen have proved less than enthusiastic about attending COMCEC meetings to explore business opportunities in Islamic countries, the reason for this being that they could make much more handsome profits at home with much fewer -or no- bureaucratic difficulties.⁸²

Turkey's connection with COMCEC has also facilitated the implementation of the new Turkish foreign policy in establishing new ties within the Islamic world while strengthening the already established ones. It helped Turkey to institutionalize its ongoing efforts to expand its bilateral ties with the Islamic states from the region of the Middle East, where those ties had originally begun to be established in the 1970s, to Africa, Asia, and -with the collapse of the Soviet Union- Central Asia and the Caucasus. Worth mentioning in this context is Turkey's pledge of 10 million dollars in assistance to the drought-stricken countries of the African Sahel during the

Seventh Session of the COMCEC, İstanbul, 6-9 October 1991, Ankara, COMCEC Coordination Office, October 1991, pp. 124-126.

⁸²See note 36.

First Session of COMCEC held in 1984. Altogether, it was a further step by the Turks to perpetuate their previous isolated efforts to expand bilateral ties with the Islamic states, starting under the military régime of the early 1980, this time in an international setting. Even though the amount of the pledge was quite symbolic, it could serve as a means of impressing the Islamic world with Turkey's determination to contribute to Islamic solidarity in the field of economy and commerce even while struggling to realize its own economic development, thereby inspiring sympathy with Turkey.⁸³

Lastly, and, it seems, most importantly, to Turkey, COMCEC chairmanship provides the Turks with the prestigious position that they have always sought in their relations with the Islamic world, a position that is expected to produce respect in the eyes of Turkey's Western allies. The Turks seem to derive particular satisfaction from that position. They claim that it is the Turkish leadership that has been the driving factor behind COMCEC's achievements so far. According to them, Turkish leadership contributed to the development by COMCEC of a realistic approach to the aim of economic cooperation among the Islamic states, pragmatically giving the aim of increasing intra-Islamic trade top priority among the projects indicated in the Plan For Action.⁸⁴ They also attribute the present established institutional identity of COMCEC -i.e., its regular meetings with a statute and rules of procedure adopted at the seventh session of COMCEC in October 1991- to an atmosphere of organizational discipline achieved under the uniting leadership of Turkey.⁸⁵ The election of the Turkish President to the permanent chairmanship -and the Turkish Prime Minister to the Alternate chairmanship- of the General Assembly Bureau of COMCEC at the Seventh Session of COMCEC held in 1991, indicates a further strengthening of Turkey's prestigious position in COMCEC.

As for the development of Turkey's relations with the Islamic world in specific fields after Turkey took on the chairmanship of COMCEC, the record was one of ups and downs. Despite the optimistic -and somewhat desperate- view of the Motherland Party leaders previously mentioned to the effect that the necessity of economic cooperation due to increasing interdependence eases political tensions in a controlling manner, quite the reverse occurred. The success of the economic cooperation between Turkey and the OIC depended ultimately on the actual development of Turkey's bilateral economic relations with the Islamic countries and on the development of multilateral economic co-operation among the members of the OIC themselves, both of these being conditioned by politics to a considerable extent. As far as the former matter was concerned, as if to

⁸³See *Milliyet*, January 8, 1988, p. 5.

⁸⁴See note 36.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

deliberately refute the aforementioned arguments emerging in the West in the early 1980s to the effect that the Turkish economy was shifting towards the Islamic countries, the share of Turkey's exports to the Islamic countries in its total exports declined steadily from 45.79% in 1983 to 28.97% in 1988, 25% in 1989 and 19% in 1990.⁸⁶ In addition to the drastic decline in crude oil prices in early 1986, which reduced the purchasing power of both Iraq and Iran -two of Turkey's biggest trade partners- the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) and the subsequent Kuwait crisis of August 1990 played a major role here. Likewise, these and other political conflicts, whether between Turkey and Islamic states like the question of the utilization of the waters of the Euphrates river or among regional states like the Arab-Israeli conflict caused considerable Turkish losses in the fields of contracting activities and energy.⁸⁷

As far as multilateral cooperation was concerned, that depended on the implementation of the economic cooperation projects adopted by COMCEC. This, in turn, was ultimately related to the political will of the member states -as the Turks themselves acknowledge- as well as to the non-political factors impeding the implementation of the Plan For Action previously referred to. Whether or not OIC member states would demonstrate this political will remained to be seen, particularly in view of the apparent growth of a tendency on the part of the OIC members to form regional blocs among themselves, such as the Arab Cooperation Council and the Arab Maghreb Union, both established in 1989.

IX. Prospects for the Future:

As Turkey's political and economic interests become more complex and the country's aims look more achievable and at the same time more difficult to achieve through the efforts of Turkey alone given the advance of the post-Cold War era uncertainties concerning global order, the importance of the OIC as a foreign policy instrument of Turkey may be expected to increase. In this context, since Turkey's balanced policy between the Muslim East and the West has become more relevant than ever in this new era, this country may be expected to continue to play its traditional moderate, moderating and energizing role in the OIC, contributing to the efforts of the organization in the direction of political and economic cooperation.

⁸⁶See Economic Research and Evaluation Division of the Treasury and Foreign Trade Secretariat, "Foreign Trade Between Turkey and the Islamic Countries", November 1988, p. 10. See also **Summary of Monthly Foreign Trade**, December 1990, State Institute of Statistics, Prime Ministry, Republic of Turkey, p. 10.

⁸⁷See *Milliyet*, February 13, 1991, p. 5. See also *Cumhuriyet*, August 17, 1991, p. 10.

The emergence of the Turkic states, which appear to have already adopted the Turkish model in their attempts at Westernization, as new potential members of the OIC offer good prospects for increased Turkish effectiveness in the OIC. However, as in the past, structural and political differences enhanced by historical factors among the members of the OIC, including Turkey, which show no signs of fading away easily in the foreseeable future may be expected to persist, limiting both the effectiveness of Turkey's leadership and its enthusiasm in energizing political and economic co-operation among the members of the OIC for common economic development and regional stability. A case in point could be the future relationship between the OIC and the UN on the one hand, and the OIC and regional organizations like the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab Cooperation Council, the Arab Magreb Union and the Black Sea Region of Economic Cooperation on the other, in promoting global and regional economic and political cooperation with Turkey playing a certain role in the process. It is not inconceivable, for example, in the opinion of this author, that Turkey may be willing to cooperate with at least certain Islamic states in an Islamic collective security scheme not necessarily something similar to the Conference on Security and Cooperation of Europe (CSCE) which the Turks are convinced to be difficult -if not impossible- to establish if only because Islamic countries being located in different continents⁸⁸ integrated with the UN with a view to handling certain regional security issues (not only in the Persian Gulf) using all means, including military.

For one thing, however, as its passive attitude during the current issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina reveals, the UN appears to be no more ready in the post-Cold War period than it was previously to confront "any aggressor anywhere", and thus to implement the main principle of collective security action. This, if true, casts a dark shadow on its previously-mentioned image in Turks' eyes as the "[security] umbrella of the new world." As for the OIC members, due to the absence of the political will within that organization, they do not demonstrate a willingness to go beyond the OIC's recent role on the issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina of urging the UN to take the necessary military measures, being ready to join forces with the UN, as Turkey, is should the UN ultimately decide to take those measures. Besides, due to the policy of benevolent neutrality toward regional Islamic states, which it is apparently continuing to pursue, Turkey can not be expected to contribute to the same degree even to Persian Gulf security in the future as it did during the Gulf crisis of August 1990, if Islamic states do not act almost unanimously, cooperating with the UN as they did against Saddam's Iraq during that crisis.

⁸⁸See statement made by Turkish President Özal in *Hürriyet*, December 9, 1991, p. 19.

As regards the relationship between the OIC and regional organizations in promoting regional economic cooperation and political stability, one question is whether these regional establishments will hamper or complement the activities of the OIC to secure Islamic solidarity among its members in the field of economic cooperation in the future. Another question appears to be whether regional establishments as examples of regional integration processes -being parts of or complementary to the broader scheme of the OIC- contribute to the solution of regional crises through promoting peaceful dialogue. Despite the optimistic functionalist Turkish view that the necessity of economic cooperation among the Islamic states is bound to smooth out their political circumstances. The former question is ultimately a question of the political will of the members, which is difficult to foresee, while the answer to the latter will depend on whether there exists the necessary political consensus on the parts of the members of the regional establishments that would be necessary for economic cooperation to begin; a condition that hardly exists, for example, in today's Black Sea Region of Economic Cooperation.