

## Hampering Factors in Relations of Turkey-Turkic Republics

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### Abstract

The article touches the historical background of relations and further goes on with relations between Turkey and Turkic Republics just after the independence of the republics. The article analyzes the “Turkish Model” which became widely debated topic in literature and hampering factors such as lack of institutional preparation and experts, the difference of perceptions between the sides, entangling into regional rivalry with Russia and Iran, excessive nationalistic discourse perceived as Pan-Turkist chauvinism by the policymakers, unrealizable pledges, the policy shifts of the republics as well as politico-economic instability in Turkey during the 1990s have been presented and concluded. Findings are based on published books, article, and newspaper coverage. The article sheds light to initial relations between Turkey and Turkic Republics of Central Asia and may assist to understand the current relations better.

**Keywords:** Turkey-Central Asia Relations, Ottoman-Central Asia Relations, Turkish Foreign Policy, Turkic Republics

## Türkiye-Türki Cumhuriyetler Arasındaki İlişkilere Olumsuz Etki Eden Faktörler

### Özet

Makalede, Osmanlı-Hanlıklar arasında ki ilişkilerin tarihi sürecine değinilerek Soğuk Savaş sonrası Türkiye-Orta Asya Türki Cumhuriyetleri arasındaki ilişkileri ve bu ilişkilere damgasını vuran “Türk Modeli” ve genel ilişkileri olumsuz etkileyen ve oluşan beklentileri karşılamasına engel olan faktörleri, konuyla ilgili yazılan kitap, makale ve gazeteler analiz edildi. Kurumsal ve uzman yetersizliği, taraflar arasında ki algılama farkları, İran ve Rusya ile bölgesel rekabete girilmesi, aşırı milliyetçi söylem ve yerine getirilemeyen vaatler, Türki Cumhuriyetlerin dış politika değişikliğiyle 90’lı yıllara damgasını vuran siyasi ve ekonomik istikrarsızlık gibi faktörler üzerinde durularak makale sonuçlandırıldı.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Osmanlı-Orta Asya İlişkileri, Türkiye-Orta Asya İlişkileri, Türk Dış Politikası, Türki Cumhuriyetler

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## Introduction

Turkey-Central Asia Relations, respectively, the policy of Turkey toward Central Asia (CA) have been widely discussed in large spectrum from politicians and scholars to journalists and civil persons in concerned countries and international environment. The collapse of the Soviet Union (SU) and declarations of independence by the former Soviet Republics constituted a new international environment with geopolitical importance and let global and regional powers introduce new policies toward the region.

The geopolitical shift affected the Turkish foreign policy more than any other country. By attaining independence, the Turkic Republics of Central Asia emerged in the international arena and urgently needed political and economic collaborations. Ethnic and linguistic as well as religious kinship made the Turkey with its liberal economy and democratic state system suitable country to start relations. The new circumstances and trend commenced tremendous foreign policy shift in Turkey. Turkish foreign policy has changed from periphery to the center; from security oriented realism to ambitious idealism. New circumstance caught Turkish policy makers as well as policy makers of the Turkic Republics unprepared because the relations between Turkey and Central Asian states were almost non-existent during Cold War. As Turkey and the Turkic Republics were in ideologically confronting camps furthermore, latter were under the strict control of Moscow, especially in their foreign policies, there was no contact for seventy years. Since Turkey's point of reference was the West and security oriented, it lacked experts and institutions generally on Asia and particularly on Central Asia. As a result of this factor initially Turkey's rhetoric toward the region was emotional and nostalgic additionally, too ambitions that caused exceeding expectations in the eyes of Turkic Republics and international society which could not have been realized with limited Turkish economic and political power. The unrealizable pledges caused disappointment not only in Turkic Republics but also in Turkish society. Early 1990s widely sounded "Turkish Model" lost its support in a short time and Turkey tended to more rational policy highlighting economic relations.

The factors that hindered the fully realization of the overly estimated Turkish policy objectives can be categorized as follows. Firstly, as Turkic republics emerged as nation states with different ways and methods from each other, they did not want to bind themselves with one sided intergovernmental organizations. Secondly, Russian influence which started to insert itself after a short neglecting period following the collapse of SU. Thirdly, the political economic instability in Turkey throughout the 1990s after the death of Turgut Özal made Turkey passive in global and regional

affairs including Central Asia relations. Last but not least, the foreign policy shift which oriented policies of the states of CA to balance the regional powers. Paper analyzes the factors affecting the relations between Turkey and Turkic Republics of Central Asia negatively in the perspective of “Turkish Model”. Relevant literature as well as news articles are reviewed and analyzed. In this respect, the article sheds light to the initial period of relations between Turkey and the states of Central Asia.

### **Historical Background**

Whether formal or civil, relations between the Turks of Anatolia and Turkic people of Central Asia continued throughout the centuries. Central Asia had played significant role in supporting Anatolia both spiritually through religious figures and scientifically through scholars during Seljuk and Ottoman periods. Many of the prominent figures were Central Asians during Seljuklu and Ottoman eras. Though cultural relations were continual all the time, it is accepted that political relations initially started with correspondence between Sultan Yavuz Selim of Ottoman Empire and Celaledin Ubeyd, khan of Samarkand, while Sultan Selim was preparing for Chaldiran War against Shah Ismail of Persia (Cag, 2008:128). After that time, there had been exchanges of emissaries and presents between the khans of Central Asia and Sultans of Ottoman Empire. Due to both distance and Iran being as a negative factor between the territories, relations had not thrived. The mutual exchanges of emissaries and military and economic aid coincides with the fact that either both parties or one of the parties felt vulnerable and weak. The interactions in the form of asking or providing support between the khans and the sultans occurred when the former had internal conflict or rivalry over the throne and needed the support of Caliphate and the latter when had conflict formerly with Iran and later with Russian Empire and endeavored to make the khans attack Russians (Saray, 1994:20). For instance, military equipment aid sent with an emissary named Sala Shah to Abdullah two of Bukhara Khanate (1583-1558) proves the fact that Ottomans were not disinterested toward the region. Ottomans intended to join the rivers of Don and Volga in order to solve the problem of access which was one of the major factors preventing the improvement of relations. Had the project been completed, it would have enabled the trade ships reach the Caspian Sea and flourish the trade. Even though the Don-Volga project could not be completed by Ottomans it indicates the importance Ottomans’ commitment to the region (Saray, 1994:7).

Two major factors of concentration of military, political relations between khanates of Central Asia and Ottomans were, firstly, the coincidence of Russian-Ottoman Wars and the expansion of Russian Empire toward the Central Asia and secondly, emergence of Western inspired

nationality movements which became tremendously effective among the Central Asian and Ottoman young elites. Ostroumov (2002: 26) points out that “a degree” of Ottoman on commanding the Anciyan uprising reached to Muhammed Ali Sabiroglu (MolloEsen).

Ottoman Empire’s Turkistan doctrine, first, was brought up by Young Turks (JönTürkler) then, pioneered by Enver Pasha; it became the military oriented state policy of the Committee of Union and Progress in order to revive the weakened Ottoman Empire in the Central Asian steppes (Jung and Piccoli, 2001:178). From the political perspective, this policy trend became well-known as Pan-Turkism in the literature.

Though Pan-Turkism or Turanism was military-political oriented policy, it united some Ottoman elites and the Turkic elites of the Russian Empire on an ideology of ethnic unity in order to eradicate the backwardness of Muslim-Turkic nations vis a vis Europe. The last quarter of the 19th century and early 20th century accommodated hot debates of elites and politicians particularly, in the Ottoman Empire, Central Asia, generally in the Islamic world. The debates were in two folds; a) Islamic modernization, b) ethnicity oriented political unification. In addition, there was another movement such as Islamic modernization with ethnic ingredients. Glenda Fraser states that Pan-Turkism was introduced by Tatar elites such as Ismail Gasprinsky vis-a-vis Pan-Slavism trend, emerged in Russian Empire (1988:53). The thoughts of Ismail Gasprinsky were not purely nationalistic but also with some concentration of Islamic modernization. In this respect, Pan-Islamism overbalanced Pan-Turkism in his ideas and deeds (Jung and Piccoli, 2001:177). Yusuf Akcura, a Volga Tatar, is accepted as the ideologue of Pan-Turkism in political perspective (Jung and Piccoli, 2001:177). Many of the scholars agree that the article ‘Üç Teri Siyaset’ (Three Types of State) published in a magazine, ‘Türk’ was the manifesto of Pan-Turkism (Landau, 1995:179; Shlapentokh, 2007:43; Eligü, 2010:40; Dénes, 2006:474; Özkırımlı and Sofos 2008:126). In his article Akcura, made a different approach than Islamic modernity oriented movement in that he proposed purely nationalistic model. At first, Akcura’s ideas were not accepted by Ottoman elite, but later, the committee of Union and progress owned the idea to compensate the lost lands of the empire in Africa and Europe (Jung and Piccoli, 2001:178).

The military oriented Pan-Turkism policy had cost a lot to the Ottoman Empire in the War of Sari Kamish with unforgettable tragedies. The Pioneer of Pan-Turkism policy, Enver Pasha was killed while he was attending uprisings of ‘Basmacı’. Generally, Pan-Turkism was not widely accepted in Ottoman Empire and Turkish republic afterwards. Kemalism constrained nationalism in the borders of Turkish republic and embraced all ethnic

groups living in Turkey as Turks. By stating; *“I am neither a believer in a league of nations of Islam, nor even in a league of the Turkish peoples. (...) Neither sentiment nor illusion must influence our policy. Away with the dreams and shadows! They have cost us dear in the past.”* (Jung and Piccoli, 2000:8) Atatürk refused Panturkist claims politically. By refusing Panturkist policy, Kemalism distanced itself from interfering generally, all the Turks living outside Turkey, and particularly, Turkic nations in CA. However, Kemalism extensively used cultural Panturkist rudiments such as Central Asia as original lands of Turks, in the process of nation-state building (Jung and Piccoli, 2001:179). It can be assumed that the fundamentals of strong kinship of Anatolian Turks toward the Turkic people of CA stems from the deep historical affiliation as well as the cultural Pan-Turkism of Kemalism.

Turkey’s Kemalist foreign policy toward outside Turks and ideological, security oriented Cold War policy resulted in engaging Turkic nations of CE through Moscow. Therefore, relations in political sense, was cut during the Cold War.

### **The Collapse of the Soviet Union and Independent Turkic States**

The collapse of the Soviet Union on 25 December, 1991, followed by the declarations of independence of 15 states not only ended the cold war but also exposed enormous geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-cultural area on the world stage. Gaining their independence one by one, the newly independent states of Central Asia (NIS) were all faced economic problems inherited from Soviet past and needed political and economic support and development models. While the Eastern European Countries developed close relations with European countries, Turkic states of CA established close relations with Turkey. The presidents of Turkic states chose Turkey for their first official visits.

The official visit to Turkey had started even earlier than declarations of independence by officials of Turkic states. Kyrgyz Republic’s premier, N. Isakov along with delegation paid a visit to Turkey in January, 1989. Isakov stated in a press conference in Bishkek that history, language, psychological and geographic factors as well as Turkey’s developed economy enable to improve the relations (Bishkek shamy, 1989). To understand the need and trend of Turkic republics for politico-economic support one should review the historical process these nations preceded.

As all the NIS needed models, newly independent Turkic states (NITS), after having been under the hegemony of Russian Empire and subsequently Soviet Union for 140 years needed support to maintain their independence and recover their economy. From geographical and political perspective, there were two countries for NITS to turn one Iran and another Turkey. The

NITS leaders with socialist-secular educational background preferred latter. It would be not proper for the NITSs to turn China or Russia as their neighbors since these countries declared independence from Russia with determination to install liberal free market economy. In conclusion, ethnic, linguistic, and politico-economic factors directed the NITS toward Turkey and Turkey was more than happy for its model role for these sister states.

### **The Foreign Policy Shift of Turkey and Recognizing the NITSs**

Independent Turkic states had two major effects on Turkey and Turkish foreign policy. Firstly, the emergence of independent Turkic states changed Turkey's geopolitical importance from periphery to the center. While Turkey was the southeastern flank of Western alliance during the Cold War, it became center of the new geopolitical area. Secondly, in accordance with the new description, Turkish foreign policy objective and accordingly foreign policy shift has started to shape the minds of policy-makers. The rhetoric and orientation of Turkish foreign policy have changed and it's still an ongoing process. Late Ozal's 1991 Moscow visit included Turkic republics aroused unprecedented interest in Turkish public toward emerging Turkic Republics (Fidan, 2010:112). Turkey initially, recognized the independence of Azerbaijan on November 10, 1991 and soon after December 8, 1991 following the declaration of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Turkey recognized all the former Soviet republics' independence. The events following the emergence of the NIS have not only changed the mindset of Turkish policymakers but also Turkish people on the whole.

The emergence of NITS generated sentimental ardor in Turkish public from all segments of society. In Turkish media and political circles, were discussed Statements such as "Turkish world from Adriatic to the wall of China" (Aras, 2008). The emotional impassion hampered the development of rational constructive policies toward the region. However, Turkey's recognition of the NITS, political rhetoric, establishing embassies hold on four factors beyond the one mentioned above such as a) politic, b) economic, c) socio-cultural, and d) security.

First of all, while foreign policy goals of Turkey had been Western and Western institutions oriented during the Cold War, in order not to get isolated and loose its strategic value and respect in the eyes of the U.S and European Community, it began to convert its passive Cold War policy into active regional policy without altering foreign policy parameters set in its foundation (Kona, 2008). The NITS enabled Turkey to express its strategic importance vis-a-vis the U.S and Europe. The U.S and European support against the likely rise of Iran's influence as well as favoring of the "Turkish Model" by the NITS were founded the Turkish foreign policy toward the

region. In addition, the aim of transporting energy from energy rich countries of CE to the world markets meant not only economic gaining but also political which made the NITS more critical for Turkey.

Secondly, Economic factor played the vital role in the formation of Turkish policy toward Central Asia. Kona explains that the focus of Turkish policy-makers on CA was due to significant natural gas and oil reserves, export opportunities for Turkish businessmen and employment for Turkish workers (Kona, 2008). After the 1980s intensive process of industrialization parallel with speedy urbanization and gradually increasing trend of energy need day by day directed Turkey, importing oil and gas from Middle East, Algeria and Russia, to diversify its energy imports. That Middle East lost its reliability from the perspective of energy security due to the Gulf War was affective in the energy policy of Turkey. Turkish policy-makers expected huge capital income, transfer fee, more importantly, political influence from the transfer of Caucasian and Central Asian oil and gas to the world markets through Turkey (Miles, 1999:325). Gungormus emphasizes that Turkish policymakers realistically hoped the probable energy projects would bring not only economic but also political gain to Turkey (Gungormus, 2008).

One of the props of economic factor is that gradually and steadily growing Turkish private sector needed export and import areas which made Central Asia an important destination (Kuru, 1999:149). The desperate need for exported goods in Central Asia soon after the independence was evident enough to justify this trend. The phenomena ‘Suitcase Trade’ emerged after the collapse of Soviet Union is another indicator to show the need to imported goods. Lastly, Central Asia became an alternative to Germany and Arab countries in order to provide solution to unemployment problem which started after 1990 and was on increase (Gungormus, 2008).

Thirdly, socio-cultural factor was other common denominator in relations. Kinship, common language, religion pushed both Turkish and Central Asian leaders to establish relations. Gungormus writes that policymakers hoped that kinship, common language, religion and history would enable to form high level economic and political relations (Gungormus, 2008). In addition, that media and civil actors, maintainers of horizontal communication, supported and demanded establishing relations based on kinship directed politicians to initiate new dimensions. Emotional wave from the public forced politicians to make hasty reflective statements and no politician could have done otherwise.

Last but not least factor is the geography (in the sense of geopolitics) and security that forced the parties to establish relations. It’s natural that Turkey would rather have sister states rather than Russia or any other power

in its immediate eastern border and beyond. It's irrefutable that the NITS had two most important aims; one, to integrate with the world by transforming from Socialist economy to market economy, the other to adopt democratic state system. It's well understood from the geographical perspective that the closest different (from other states in the region) state systems were/are Iran and Turkey. It would be inappropriate, based on above goals, to take China and other regional states as models.

When Turkey is considered, it would be more than ideal to have liberal and democratic states for maximum security on its eastern neighborhood. It was imperative for Turkey to gain new political missions to compensate its diminishing strategic value in the NATO. In accordance with the previous point the NITS played significant role in psychological security perception of Turkish public shaped, initially, by trauma of occupation before the war of independence and later by state indoctrination such as "*Turks have no friend other than Turks*". In this sense, the independence of Turkic states of CA and Caucasus meant more for Turkey than any other state.

In conclusion, Turkey's recognizing the NITS of CA and Caucasus and opening embassies and introducing policies as mentioned above based on political, economic, socio-cultural and geographic-security factors. Turkish policy-makers engaged the region with psychological political, economic expectations and goals formed on aforementioned factors. However, all the factors that initially made the relations between Turkey and NITS more special than those of NITS with other countries turned out to be non-rational and non-constructive due to some hampering factors.

### **Factors with Negative Impacts on Relations**

#### ***Lack of Institutions and Experts***

Ahmet Davutoglu claims that "Turkey faced lack of preparation for mapping up strategies toward CA which suddenly became basic foreign policy area of Turkish foreign policy, by not being able to adapt to international dynamic conjuncture emerged after the end of Cold War." (Davutoglu, 2008:487). By stating so, he reveals that Turkey's policy toward the NITSs lacked political preparation and strategic planning. One of the reasons of this unpreparedness was Western oriented passive foreign policy tradition of the Cold War period. Following the Bolshevik Revolution and founding of Turkish republic, generally peoples of all the outside Turks and particularly, those of the Turkic peoples of CA were neither on the agenda of politics nor academia. Four factors come out for Turkey not having experts on Asia in general and CA in particular.



First of all, Turkish policy has the background of security orientation focusing on Europe and the Balkans starting from Tanzimat Era (Davutoglu, 2008:488). According to Davutoglu this diplomatic background impeded political experience on the strategies of Asian scale. Next, westernization endeavors and policy-making attempts hindered to make technical and institutional preparations toward the Asia and CA. Then, combined with the views of elites which was due to the irrational, nonstrategic policy of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), along with adventure and fiasco of Enver Pasha, negative assumptions of enlightenment philosophy toward the East and Asia, the negligence of the outside Turks in the Kemalist foreign policy, made CA deserted region in the Turkish foreign policy institutions and at universities. Lastly, the psychological atmosphere of the Cold War, a great security threat on Turkey, and more treacherously the pressure on people and institutions and natural consequences emerging from this pressure hindered people get interested in areas in Communist bloc.

Cold War created not only camps and states belonging to these camps but also framed ideological dividing views and polarization in the countries and institutions in the Western bloc. Vivaly, the ideological fracture in societies resulted in assuming the people interesting in countries such as the SU and China as representatives of opposite bloc (Davutoglu, 2008:489). The aforementioned perception was felt more in Turkey than in any other state as it made up the periphery because of being neighbor to the SU. Turkey had not had experts even on its immediate neighbor, Russia, due to the pressure of ideological earmark in 1990s. Another negative effect of the Cold War on Turkish foreign policy is that especially after becoming the member of NATO, Turkish foreign policy (TFP) became static and obstructed getting experience and expertise by Turkish foreign policymakers on other areas. In this respect, the Cold War inhibited to building up active and multidimensional policies.

### ***Russia and Iran Factor***

Due to Turkey's having difficulty to adapt its policies to swiftly changing processes soon after the collapse of the SU impeded to make rational and well-planned policies toward CA and thwarted well-balanced coordination among the policies concerning other regions such as Russian Federation (RF) and Iran (Davutoglu, 2008: 489-490). Davutoglu claims that in Turkish foreign policy, absence of grading and coordination has always been felt and it became dramatically apparent in her CA policy (Davutoglu, 2008:490). Despite being new independent states and that formation of foreign policy was an ongoing process, the Turkic states of Central Asia were successful in grading and coordination of their policy toward major powers with the help of appropriateness of conjuncture. By wisely balancing

the regional and major powers, engaging with the region, Turkic republics gained to exercise unimpeded foreign policy vis-a-vis major powers (Panda, 109). Three major factors played the impeding role in Turkish policy toward Central Asia.

- i. Turkey entangled into rivalry both with Iran, stuck under economic sanctions and had historical, cultural links with the region, under the influence of American policy of containment (Kavalski, 2011:228; Hunter, 2010:165) and the RF which has historical and economic infrastructure and cultural relations because of the ethnic Russian population. Iran that had direct connection thanks to common borders and had good relations with the SU (Hunter, 2010:105) and later with RF also was very careful to follow purely economic and cultural policies rather than ideological rhetoric in order not to distance the leaders of CA had the upper hand vis-à-vis Turkey.
- ii. Since Turkey needed to use the Iranian territory for land transportation, Pan-Turkism based foreign policy did not have chance to be successful. In this respect, without railways installed between the regions through Caucasus and without tensions eased in Caucasus, it was impossible to exercise productive policies. The perception of Iran as rivalry made the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) which was tried to activate by new members in the Post-Soviet era, ineffective. The ECO could have been more successful if chauvinistic rhetoric of Turkish policymakers not worried Iran, one of important member states.
- iii. Turkish policy toward the region, perceived internationally as Pan-Turkism, not only worried its southeastern neighbor Iran but also entangled it into geopolitical rivalry with Russia in Caucasus and CA. The RF criticized the summits of the heads of States of Turkish Speaking countries behind the curtain until 1994 and afterward openly (Fidan, 2010:119). Russia protested any kind of ethnic based formation attempts in 1990s, and Turkish policy caused reactions in official and nonofficial curricula in the RF. Two countries came up against due to Caucasus and Central Asia as self-described by Russian policymakers as “near abroad” (blizhneyezarubezhye). Firstly, it was practically impossible for Russia to be oblivious to the formations in its sphere of influence by which it has political and economic interests and founded its position as a regional power on the respected area. Secondly, any ethnic organizations even ethnic discourse such as Pan-Turkism was protested and rejected by Russia in that, this kind of formations could have affected the Muslim and Turkic minorities in Russia, indicative of Russian internal security reflexes. By being vigilantly aware that if minorities would begin to struggle for independence it would be disaster for the RF, Russian leader and policymakers kept close eye on

Turkey-the NITS relations and responded events in progress from time to time. After 1995, Russia reasserted its influence with “near abroad” policy tools such as ethnic Russians leaving in CE, energy and transportation lines and Central Asian elites with the background of Russian educational system. Consequently, it was out of question for Turkey to compete with the RF, since latter had upper hand through economic infrastructure and historical experience accompanied by military economic power. By bringing out ethnicity oriented policies and formations as policy goals cost Turkey a great deal of opportunities.

In conclusion, Panturkist political discourse of Turkish leaders triggered off allergies originated in history in Russia and Iran. Turkey, needing Iran for transport routes, became ineffective in the region. The above mentioned bombastic Panturkist rhetoric resulted in Russian pressure on the leaders of the NITS; in addition, it prepared the ground for Russia-Iran rapprochement vis-à-vis Turkey. As will be explained subsequently, the perception difference between Turkish and Turkic leaders made the ethnic based policies obsolete.

### **Excessive Nationalistic Discourse and Perception Difference**

Another factor hindering initially highly promising relations between Turkey and Turkic republics was the difference of perception on relative nations in Anatolia and in Turkic republics. The terms, used by politicians and public in Turkey to describe Turks living outside the borders of Turkey such as ‘outside Turks, Central Asian Turks, Kyrgyz Turks, Uzbek Turks, etc.’, are not perceived as in Turkey. Even though the term ‘*the children of father Turk (Turk atanyngbaldary)*’ is used, it is used only to reference the distant history. Namely, it does mean ‘I am a Turk’ for a Kyrgyz or is not equal to ‘I am a Kyrgyz’.

The identity of being a *Turk* in the republic of Turkey is the result of nation-state building process reflecting all people living in Turkey regardless of their origin. This consciousness becomes manifest in the verse of oath, repeated in choir every morning by school children, as ‘*I am righteous, hardworking Turk (meaning, I am righteous and hardworking so I am Turk)*’ It can be said that this perception stalled the relations because there were not enough, if not at all, experts and scientific work on the region, and people to balance and direct the euphoria into rational policies.

Perception difference or misperception is problematic in various ways (Fidan, 2010:119). It would not be logical for the NITS, in the process of founding nation-states with different methods from each other, to accept ‘being Turks’ as an identity. Moreover, the ‘Turkishness’ perception or

identity do not even encompasses the era of the Ottoman empire in that it came into existence with the foundation of the Turkish Republic. It's written in literature that Ottomans used the term 'Turk' for farmers living in Anatolia. Even though the terms such as '*Central Asian Turks*' uttered by Turkish politicians and scholars meant cultural closeness and kinship, they were not accepted politically, even received with frozen formality by the leaders and elites of CE because it emphasized "seniority" vis-a-vis NITS (Larrabeeand Lesser, 2003:111).

Initially, being subject to the rule of the Russian Empire then the SU, the elites of the NITS were diligent to keep their independence. The rhetoric such as the union of Turks sounded by the Turkish politicians caused misconceptions and misunderstandings of the leaders of Turkic republics. Turkey viewed CE as Turkistan and endeavored to pursue general policies for all states in the region. There were four different countries with distinctive features. Turkish policymakers ignored the Soviet period in the lives of people of CE between 1917 and 1991, however, it was during that period that borders were created and the differences among various people were highlighted. Partially, this policy of Turkey still ongoing process today. The political discourse based on supra identity as *Turkishness* meant acceptance and adaptation of Turkish as spoken in Turkey. This approach obstructs Turkish leaders and policymakers to treat their counterparts equally. It may be so that Turkish policymakers and elites had made subconscious analogy between the Northern Turkic Cyprus and Turkic states of CE. The "senior brother" approach of Turkey toward Turkic republics weakened Turkey's hand vis-a-vis the PRC that approached to the region accepting the states of Central Asia as equals. Furthermore, excessive ethnic discourse not only distanced the elites of the NITS but also perturbed global and regional powers such as the U.S., Russia and China. The perturbation resulted in two folds; one, the U.S and the EC pulling the rug from supporting Turkish policy toward the region, the other Russia and China received Turkey as rivals and pressured regional on the leaders of the region. The opposition of the RF to the summits of the heads of Turkish Speaking Countries is well-known (Donaldson and Noguee, 2009:101).

To conclude, since Turkish approach toward the NITS was based on a differently perceived concept, inappropriate policies were introduced. Turkish leaders' political approach to the region resembled the military policy of Committee of Union Progress creating unrealizable expectations and caused the leaders' cautious approach toward Turkey.

### **Political and Economic Instability**

Turkey started active regional policies following the Cold War, but politically and economically 1990s were so critical in its history that it not only lost the power of being model to the NITS but also it lost confidence in itself. The era of euphoria, proposing idealist and united Turkish world, moreover, uttering ambitious discourses such as ‘the 21st century will be the Turkish century’, Turkish world from Adriatic to the wall of China’, bumped the realities of Turkey which went on to the post-modern military coup. Throughout the 1990s, Turkey could meddle and even observe neither its regional affairs nor the World affairs. If we assume that the power projection of states in foreign policy is proportional with their internal dynamics, Turkey during the aforementioned period could not have continued relations with the NITS as efficient as the euphoric declarations.

To emphasize the failure of relations Davutoglu points out, ‘*The changing character of describing the foreign policy priorities during the political instability at the time of transition period caused impasses in the short term. Turkey’s foibles enhanced the maneuvers of the other players in CE*’ (Davutoglu, 2008:449). He manifestly explains the political instability and its repercussions to Turkish foreign policy. Isolated due to the political instability, it was impossible for Turkey to improve relations and role model for the NITS which were in a transition of active and changeable period.

The instability in Turkey proceeded by economic downturn resulted in not only to become aware that Turkey was too weak to fulfill its economic pledges to Turkic states, but also declarations off the rhetoric by the U.S and the EC to support the “Turkish model”. Because of assassinations, covered murders, increasing terror incidents, political-economic instability followed by post-modern coup, Turkey could not inspire confidence to the Turkic Republics of CE. Also, it’s worth mentioning that, the death of TurgutOzal, introducing liberal economy and pioneer in foreign policy, also played negative role in relations with Turkic states as he was the forerunner to establish initial relations. To sum up, the negative image caused by political instability flamed by economic downturn in Turkey, affected Turkey-Turkic republic relations negatively.

### **Lack of Coordination**

On lack of coordination and grading on different regions Davutoglu states that; ‘*the lack of coordination and grading, common in Turkish foreign policy, revealed itself dramatically in the policy toward the Turkic states.*’ (Davutoglu, 2008:489-490). The relations between Turkey and Turkic republics stuck in three impeding factors; firstly, lack of coordination among regions, secondly, the institutional weakness due to the weakness of

coordination between the official-unofficial actors within the state, in addition, incongruence between strategic sanity as a determiner of foreign policy goals and tactical steps to realize strategic goals.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union emerged an area with ethnically, culturally, and religiously kin people. It was followed economic, cultural collaborations, leading to fast and reciprocal circulation of people (Davutoglu, 2008:489-490). Since official actors did not support, direct and supervise enough this horizontal intercommunication, it caused errant enterprises and disappointments in economic sphere. Moreover, reportedly some parties provided adverse reports to block the activities of the discrepant NGOs according to the same parties' ideological views to the authorities of Turkic states during the instability period. Interestingly, this highlights the inconsistency of internal political culture of Turkey and foreign policymaking process.

The other problem hindering relations to set on rational base was, as mentioned above, unsettlement of 'strategy-tactic' inconsistency by political and bureaucratic presenters. Because of the difficulties during and after the War of Independence to keep borders safe and the static foreign policy practice of Cold War period, which had shaped the mind-set of the policymakers, Turkey could not prioritize strategies and take actions according to these strategies, required due to changing paradigms of post-cold war period. Turkey's Central Asia policy damaged Turkish-Russian, Turkish-Iran relations and same countries approached Turkish-Turkic republic relations with distrust.

Davutoglu attracted attention to the strategy-tactic inconsistency of Turkish foreign policy during 1990s by stating; '*Some political elites claiming to make a strategy narrowed Turkey's policy options by turning tactical steps into a strategy*'(1996) The tactic-strategy inconsistency revealed itself in Turkish-Turkic states relations more than other areas. That while Turkey wanted to shape its policy toward Turkic state in accordance with the US and the EC policies, her rhetoric influenced by euphoric waves from society emphasized with terms such as '*Turkic World from Adriatic to the wall of China*'(Trifunovska, 1996:156) and '*Turkish century*' is a dramatic example of tactic-strategy inconsistency. Due to the tactic-strategy inconsistency of Turkish foreign policy, Turkish foreign policy toward CE failed compared with that of Iran which had to play a diplomacy game vis-a-vis systemic powers.

In conclusion, the lack of coordination between official and nonofficial actors, tactic-strategic inconsistency weakened Turkey's hand vis-a-vis other players. The lack of coordination not only undermined Turkey's relations

with Russia and Iran, also diluted its relations with the Turkic states of CE. Moreover, Turkey lost the US and the EC support in its policy as role model.

### **The Foreign Policy Shifts of the Turkic Republics**

The leaders and elites of the Turkic republics had intensive official visits following the independence to find solutions lingering economic problems and to gain the World experience in state building. Soon after the declarations of independence, they realized that many states are interested in their region and countries and they started to pursue pragmatic and rational policies to balance the interested countries.

The foreign policy shifts, or revisions, of the NITS had directly affected Turkish foreign policy toward the region. That the leaders of Turkic states, looking for political and economic support, chose Turkey as “model” made Turkish public and leaders more than happy but Turkey was not strong enough to keep that position. Realizing that Turkey could not meet the expectations accompanied by the “senior brother” approach of Turkey and reaction of other countries, almost all Turkic states shifted their foreign policies. The ouster of Elchibey, expelled president of Azerbaijan, reportedly supported by Russia fastened the process of foreign policy change in the NITS. The leaders of the NITS well understood that it’s vital to balance the major powers in order to secure independence and their governments. First, the economic problems following independence, then, the overthrow of Elchibey, following the civil war in Tajikistan and the interference of Russia made the leaders of the NITSs foreign policy brokers. Headed by Uzbekistan, Turkic republics of CE behaved freely and daringly in foreign policy issues, thanks to the natural consequences of anxious approach of big powers balancing each other. Though major powers such as the U.S, Russia and China refrained to entangle direct rivalry with one another, they followed active policy toward the region.

Through common borders and desperately needed economic aid, the PRC followed successful policy and became the second strong power projector in economic sense following Russia with its historical experience in the region. In this context, it’s fair to state that the 1990s became the decade of China in the space of CE. With their vast natural resources accompanied by policies of regional powers, the Turkic states of CE became the center of attention which led them change their foreign policies in order to get more support and gain more independent foreign policy by balancing the interested players. The “Turkish model” was no more in the rhetoric of the leaders. Leaving out Turkmenistan’s impartiality, all the NITS shifted from one sided policies to multilateral balancing policies and targeted rational, result oriented policies. Turkey could not provide much needed

economic support due to its limited economic power and political instability whereas the NITS's major foreign policy goal was to get economic support and strengthen their independence.

To conclude, the U.S as a global power, Russia and PRC and regional powers' interests in CE, and their anxious approach toward the region not to get in rivalry with each other made it possible for Turkic states to balance interested powers and gain more independent foreign policy. Having been successful in getting economic and political support of major powers, Turkic republics revised their relations with Turkey and the "Turkish model" was no more in the rhetoric of the leaders of the Turkic states.

### **Conclusion**

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War started a period of process in which states have redefined geo-economical, geopolitical, and strategic positions in the international arena. One of the most influenced countries from this changes and redefinition processes was Turkey. Turkey entered into the process of redefining its geopolitical position from southern flank of West Camp to Center of its region. Two major factors accelerated this process; first, the rejection of the EC to the membership of Turkey, second, emerging of newly independent Turkic state in Caucasus and in Central Asia.

Collapse of the Soviet Union not only ended the Cold War also with the declarations of independence by fifteen Soviet republics brought about emergence of new geopolitical and geo-economical area into the international arena. The independent Turkic states played significant role in shaping trends of redefining Turkey's role in international system. The new trend took Turkey from periphery to the center, from realism to the idealism.

The immediate recognition of the independence of the Turkic states by Turkey and the firsts official visits made by the presidents of the Turkic states, who expressed their support for "Turkish Model" in their rhetoric ignited much interest in the public of Turkey and Turkic states, furthermore, the support of the U.S and the EC representatives for Turkish foreign policy toward the region created unrealizable expectations in concerned countries and the international circles.

Common language, culture and religion accompanied by the supports of the systemic powers, media and public support and the need for model for the Turkic states played positive role in establishing the relations immediately. However, as a natural result of Turkey's Western oriented policy and ideological dissociation, Turkey's lack of experts and institutional preparedness, the negative effects of policies of interested countries such as



Russia and Iran, the excessive nationalistic “Pan-Turkist” rhetoric and proceeded by “big brother” perception of Turkish policymakers, and political and economic instability marked during 1990s in Turkey, and lastly because of the intense and active interests of global and regional powers such as the RF, PRC, USA, EC toward to CE which caused the foreign policy shift of Turkic states played negative role in improving the relations and meeting the expectations.

Turkish foreign policy toward the region and the relations with the Turkic states of Central Asia were not so successful during 1990s in comparison with the expectations emerged initially in Turkey, Turkic states and in the international community. In this failure, external factors as mentioned above and internal instability in Turkey and policy shift in Turkic republics played significant role.

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