EUROPEAN SECURITY: A MYTH OR A REALITY?
A TURKISH PERSPECTIVE*

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Soon after World War II the concept of a united Europe became one of the main motive forces of Western Europe. The nation, originating from the Enlightenment project, became a tremendous task for many people, reinforcing their faith in progress, freedom, democracy and human dignity. It promised a secure, tranquil stage of a rational and prosperous modernity. Now Europe could live and continue to develop in peace. Moreover, at the end of the Cold War, new hopes and a promise of an even better life with a rather hasty declaration of the "ideological victory of liberal democracy and the free market system" was generated. Accordingly, the project of modernity expanded a new vista for both security and peace in Europe and the world. With the fall of the "evil empire", a new world was in the making and amidst the epic challenges, there were tremendous opportunities for actually the entire mankind to be seized.

But it was soon to be seen that this understanding of the events was too neat to be true. In the last few years, the faith in a secure and peaceful Europe has been seriously shaken. Once the initial euphoria over the fall of the Berlin Wall blew over, not only in Europe, but in other continents new fires of armed conflict flared up: Somalia, Haiti, Rwanda, Angola, Yemen, and several independent states of the former Soviet Union.

The vast panaroma of chaos and confusion which Europe had to face recently with blatant violations of peace and security in the name of nationalist and ethnic aspirations paved the way for uncertainties, doubts and

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fears about the sense of a unified and secure continent. Although the post–World War II integration was based on a categorical rejection of the notion of "ethnic cleansing", or of border changes imposed by force, this is exactly what has happened and is happening in Bosnia, whose partition along ethnic and religious lines is being condoned by the representatives of the European Union (EU).

A unified and secure Europe has lost, at least partly, its sense with ethnic and xenophobic nationalism, racism and tribalism evident today in its geopolitical space. The spirit of cooperation we were so optimistically speeking to install, appears to have been suppressed by the kind of eerie spirit of conflict and confrontation. It seems as if it will not be a harsh statement to conclude that the consolidation of the norms and values championed by the Atlantic Alliance has a long way to go.

The mercurial turnabout of the past few years have created paradoxical situations, and in order to sort out current predicament, we need to peer beneath the daily flux of events. The assessment of these events and also of recent history denote to us that we arrived at this crucial juncture in time by the entanglement of three related issues: Borders, ethnic groups and migrations. A glance of history circa 1815 shows that three empires dominated Europe: Austria-Hungarian. Russian and Ottoman. The review of the period until 1918 attributes a significance of the diversity of ethnic groups who lived in the vast territories of these empires; and subsequently, the struggle for bounderies which embedded the seeds of today's problems. The shaping of the geopolitical boundaries was then and is today, a difficult task, not only because of the complexity of the ethnic, linguistic and religious issues, but also because of the relations stemming from history. It is an undeniable fact that, from time to time, those in the power centers manipulated these factors and internationally provoked chaotic situations for their economic, political and militaristic benefits. But the post-1918 period witnessed a deliberation to rebuild societies after the war and thus the Versailles system was imposed by the victorious states, which ignored the approach of the principle of defining the national borders in accordance with the criteria of nationality. Following the "war to end all wars", Woodrow Wilson and V. I. Lenin offered competing models for a new world system that nonetheless had much in common: Both held to an internationalist vision, opposed Old World imperialism and supported self-determination, have dissolved themselves in the name of the same rights claimed by nations of the Eastern Bloc. In the 1940s, the world has experienced the horrifying results of a racist, nationalistic policy which dragged it into a catastrophe. No less important, the end of World War II witnessed the fact that the majority of the borders in Europe had been imposed by the great powers at their decisive conferences toward the end of the conflict. Followingly, post-1989 recasting of existing borders has become a fragile issue: While at present, the limits of the self-determination rights of nations are under discussion and the

danger of establishing new states based on ethnic and religious foundations is obvious, it should also be remembered that the internal stability of a state, matter of ultimate importance for perturbed balances, is always prone to exploitation. In these circumstances, it is a fact that the contestation between the civic and ethnic definition of "nation" is of crucial importance for the future of Europe.

The eudoxic optimism, which prevailed in the immediate aftermath of *Annus Mirabilis* (1989), has given way to a sober reassessment of the dimensions of reconstruction which lie ahead. The most profound changes have taken place, and continue to do so, within the strategic parameters of the Baltic Sea and the Wall of China. This area comprises Central and Eastern Europe, Ukraine, the Balkans, Russia, as well as the Trans-Caucasus and the Trans-Caspian regions. The European process within these parameters of strategy will obviously exact a heavy toll on the rest of the globe, and the future of this enlarged concept of Europe will probably be determined by its capacity to renew itself in the form of a multifaceted but integrated continent.

The number of transformed or new actors currently on the central and Eastern Europe and Western-Central Asian political scene represent different aspects in their domestic structuration. Underlying the ideological convergence of democratic standards set by the CSCE there exists a wide divergence of levels of democratic political experience. It seems that in Central and Eastern Europe, including Ukraine and Russia as well as the Balkans, the Trans-Caucasus and Central Asia, the new democracies will remain deeply preoccupied with internal matters of economic recovery and political reorganization for the foreseeable future.

Where does Turkey stand in this quest for security? I wish to expand and try to give a Turkish perspective. Turkey's position is that Europe is one and indivisible. Security in particular is indivisible. But, where does Europe begin and end? Is there a specific boundary?

It seems difficult to reach a single and a unified definition of Europe. "Asia stands on the Elbe" said Adanauer in 1946 and for a long while West Europeans had a tendency to identify Europe with the economic and political space of the European Community. Some tend to rest their definition on Judaeo-Christian tradition, which would include Americans and New Zealanders but exclude Albanians and Bosnians. This "biblical" definition of Europe ignores the fact that there has been great interplay and interaction among the three religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Besides, in their present constitution, a considerable number of Muslim immigrants form the resident, if not citizen populations of many European countries. Such an approach denotes division of the peoples of European states within their own boundaries. Such a definition would also ignore the fact that, unlike Arabs, Turks do not identify themselves by religion but by national origin. It is

somewhat ironic that just as the end of the ideological division of the continent has been declared, intentions of erecting another barrier pitting Christianity against Islam can be read between the lines of European discourses.

Another definition of Europe stems from the Greco-Latin tradition. This view totally ignores the impact of the Eastern Roman Empire on the Ottomans and of the Ottomans on Medieval and later Western European history and culture.

Furthermore, the Scandinavians of Viking descent or the Slavic peoples (unless this approach denotes an oblique reference to Roman Catholicism, later, Protestantism and Eastern European Orthodoxy) would be considered non-European. Some geometrical definitions of Europe leave large parts of Turkey and Russia outside the map of the continent. The politico-cultural validity of this delineation is practically unconfirmed by history and present relations of the two countries with European partners.

Or is Europe as it is defined in Article 237 of the Rome Treaty?

To conclude this endless debate in search of new lines of demarcation on arbitrarily rationalized criteria which only serve to mar European security, confidence and peace in the longer run, it must be kept in mind by all concerned that the divisions that man creates in his mind are mostly intellectual and moral.

Having said this, I can state that Turkey perceives Europe as an evolving continuum forming the hub of the changing world.

Turkey's role and policies have a new significance and bearing precisely in this respect. This role may be defined as the sum of the parts she plays in the mutiple context of evolving power equation of the continent, in particular, the Balkans, the eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Trans-Caucasus and the Trans-Caspian area.

However, regarding the "hub of the hub", Turkey cannot indulge in the comforting but deceptive illusion that Europe's socio-economic well being and security can be treated in a compartmentalized fashion. The vision of an exclusive Maastricht Europe confined to the "Club" cannot be regarded as the utimate Europe of the next century. The rising xenophobia and toughening immigration policies and the context of Maastricht raise questions about the content of the proposed "European Citizenship". The current trend, especially but not only in Germany could be summarized as "ethnic Germans in; the *gastarbeitern* and *schwartzkopfen* out" and poses a threatening looming question for the future of the continent.

Turkey, because of its geography and history is not and seldom was an insular country. It was always positioned geostrategically in the middle of entrenched international conflicts and in the current era of transition has a greater stake than ever in the preservation of stability in Europe and its contigious regions. In this respect the maintenance of peace in all areas around the Black Sea Littoral, in the Balkans and in the entire Mediterranean basin is of ultimate importance to Turkey. Its location in the geographic vortex of the conflicts forces Turkey to commit itself to the creation of security and stability and to deploy every effort on all international levels. Turkey's contributions to NATO operations during the recent upheavals in this hinterland** reflect its efforts geared to the creation of a belt of peace, security and stability based on cooperation and shared responsibilities around itself, without sparing any effort for confidence building in adjacent regions through dialogue and cooperation.

If the international community wants to live instead of a "myth" of European security, a "reality" of it, then it is high time to act responsively. In this connection, the dictum that "security is indivisible" should be recalled.

** Operations SHARP GUIDE in the Adriatic, DENY FLIGHT over Bosnia, UNPROFOR on the ground in Bosnia, SAFE HAVEN in Bosnia; peacekeeping forces in Nagorno Karabakh.