

From the Desk of the Editor

In light of Turkey's candidacy for a UNSC rotating non-permanent seat for the term 2009-10, with this issue of TPQ we examine Turkey's role in various international organizations. We explore how Turkey could better incarnate the oft-voiced epithets, such as 'civilizational bridge', 'energy hub' and 'regional peace broker'. Within this analysis, we also append an inspection of the legitimacy, representativeness and effectiveness of various international organizations.

President Abdullah Gül sets the ground for this issue with a comprehensive overview of why a non-permanent seat for Turkey at the UNSC is important for Turkey, Turkey's neighborhood and the world. He explains that Turkey's priority is the restoration of stability in its tension-ridden region and that Turkey has active interest in contributing to the solution of global issues ranging from eradicating terrorism and extremism to fostering human development. He urges the international community to conclude the draft Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism as soon as possible and underlines Turkey's unique position as a transit country for Eurasian energy. Touching upon the debate to reform the United Nations, President Gül notes that Turkey would like to see the role and capacity of the United Nations enhanced to deal with the evolving challenges of our times.

John Feffer, noting that Turkey "has recently improved its bridge-building skills at home and abroad," emphasizes that there are no Islamic countries among the permanent five of the UNSC and that the UN "does not reflect the true economic and political balance in the world today." As a supporting argument, he notes Turkey's co-chairmanship of the Alliance of Civilizations, an initiative under the auspices of the UN aiming to bridge divisions in the international community. Feffer raises a fundamental question: "Will a seat on the Security Council provide Turkey greater latitude" to bridge the global religious divide or is it premature to conclude this?

It is hard to ignore recent political turmoil in Turkey while evaluating its global role. Giragosian defines today's Turkey as undergoing its "deepest and potentially most disruptive degree of change with a profound reexamination of the very tenets of its national identity." While the role of the Turkish military in Turkey's political sphere is under critical scrutiny domestically, one of Turkey's obvious strengths in its argument for a rotating UNSC seat is its military capacity and track record of deploying troops to missions in Somalia, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo and, Lebanon.

Allen Collinsworth argues in favor of Turkey's UNSC bid, pointing out that Turkey is an important stakeholder in many regional issues that hold global implications. His optimism about Turkey's strong ties with the U.S. and commitment to NATO may not be shared by all. Richard Giragosian, while sharing the opinion that it

would be wise to include Turkey on the UNSC, also notes the frosting of Turkey's relationship with the United States and its involvement in more unconventional organizations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). George Stavris also reflects upon Turkey becoming more "detached from its traditional allies." He underlines that Turkey's increasing "weight on the world map" will bring additional responsibilities that Turkey should brace itself for.

A number of authors in this issue of TPQ note Turkey's "self-sufficient and assertive role as a regional power," religious credentials in the Muslim world, and intensified focus on neighbors. Giragosian notes that these changing realities are largely driven by "external challenges," such as the new global faultlines that emerged with the end of the Cold War, developments in neighboring Middle Eastern countries, and frustration with the European Union. George Stavris's view is that Turkey has been "adequately successful" in this "much-debated experiment."

The convergence of this geopolitical shift with the ascendance of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) may be unfortunate, as it plays into the perception that the AKP is not genuinely committed to aligning the country with the West. Moreover, the infighting among state institutions domestically detracts from political and institutional capital better spent on other efforts. It is important that Turkey's current leadership reach out more transparently and consistently to civil society and the public at large to explain the vision behind Turkey's foreign policy choices.

Focusing on energy, Mehmet Ö ütü warns that Turkey appears to lack the human resources and necessary corporate structure to live up to its "newly found role" as a potential energy hub. On 14 March 2008, the Turkish Daily News reported that Turkey may be "jeopardizing" the realization of the Nabucco project, which would deliver gas from the Caspian region to Europe, by demanding to buy from the suppliers and re-sell to consumers at a different price, as opposed to simply receiving a transit fee. With both European countries and those of the Caucasus and Central Asia trying to reduce reliance on unpredictable and monopolist Russia, the Turkish government may need to be cautious about taking healthy ambition a step too far. In addition, he explains that all international organizations are at a crossroads, due to changing global realities and "need re-engineering of their missions, staff, work programs and resources." He outlines how the OECD has risen to this challenge.

Dirk Vermeiren explains that Turkey has a different "vibe," partly due to the high percentage of young people. However, he notes that this asset has turned into a deficit because the country has neglected its young people and not given them a sense of empowerment. He adds that the denial of existing problems and an acute distrust of foreigners is a detriment to Turkey's moving forward.

Based on various public opinion surveys focused on the UN and the EU, Emre Erdoğan explores Turkish public's approach to international organizations. In general, a low level of confidence in international organizations (falling steadily in the case of the EU since 2004), and an escalation in their 'popularity' depending on what the particular organization has done with relation to an issue important for Turkey's national interests can be observed. He concludes that Turkish society is far from a liberal, values-based core.

The economy is an important change agent in today's Turkey. The liberalization of Turkey's trade regime has been dramatic in the last decade. Mehmet Karlı describes Turkey as a "good international citizen" in his article highlighting its place in international trade relations-especially, in the WTO, another product of the post World War II ideal of a liberal world order-. One of its founding tenets is that trade, i.e. economic interdependence, breeds political friendship. This is the same logic that led to the establishment of the IMF and World Bank in 1944. Alpaslan Korkmaz, as President of the newly established government investment agency of Turkey, shares with us a brief synopsis of Turkey's investment environment today. Korkmaz, who defines Turkey as a "front state", reminds us that it is the only member of the Organization of Islamic Conference that is also an EU candidate and explains that the ongoing deep structural reform process will render the country Euro-compatible by the end of 2012.

Turkey's track record with regard to Europeanization in the past two years has not been heartening. Intense political infighting has further led the EU membership drive to new lows on the domestic agenda. The EU goal that a few years ago struck consensus in the country needs to be rejuvenated. Ambiguous and conflicting messages emanating from leading European decision makers only serve to strengthen the authoritarian and insecure instincts in Turkey.

From the viewpoint of investors, observers and many of its own citizens, a Turkey anchored by the EU accession process and an economic program supported by the IMF generates more confidence than a Turkey without such clearly spelled-out roadmaps. As the current IMF program expires in May 2008, there are voices claiming Turkey does not need the IMF or the EU, for that matter. However, a casual glance at the day to day functioning of Turkish institutions in Ankara, would suggest otherwise.

The EU itself is indeed a moving target and an evolving entity. Striking a consensus among members is a challenge, and institutional decision-making is cumbersome, sometimes leading to sub-optimal results. Manja Vidij points out the complex decision-making structure of the EU and its inter-institutional dynamics as they relate to energy policies. Strong political will, such as that exerted by the U.S. for the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline, is needed. Maya Arakon takes up the European Institutions' reaction to the growing threat of terrorist

entities. Arakon suggests that a global institution might be necessary to deal more effectively with such threats.

Kosovo's declaration of independence in February of 2008, put the Western Balkans back on top of the international agenda. Dimitar Bechev reflects on the recent developments in Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH). It can be argued that Turkey is also a test-case for the EU's ability to 'make history.' The success of BiH is important for the EU to assert itself as a credible actor in world politics, Bechev explains. Bechev also raises questions as to the delicate balance between healthy interventionism and counterproductive interventionism, referring also to the European Stability Initiative's emphasis on the importance of "genuine democratic habits" being able to get a foothold in BiH.

The next issue of TPQ will focus on domestic policies in Turkey covering spheres such as public administration, development policies, social welfare, education policy, and the debate about a new constitution.

We are delighted by our ongoing partnership with Turkish Daily News and the continuing contribution of the European Stability Initiative. We would like to extend our appreciation for the support of Fortis Bank, Ford, Yap Kredi, Koray İnşaat, Finansbank, TEB, Borusan, Fintur, and Unit International.

As always, we thank the contributing authors and look forward to the feedback of our readers.

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