CENTRAL EURASIA THROUGH THE PRISM OF TURKEY'S SECURITY INTERESTS

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Introduction

After the Cold War, with the Soviet Union out of the way, Turkey found itself in a new security context. The U.S.S.R. as the main source of threat to Turkey vanished. But political processes in the post-Soviet space—armed conflicts, attempts of the former metropolitan state to keep the region in its orbit, and of the other actors to fill the resultant vacuum of power— created a fairly unstable geopolitical situation around Turkey. Moreover, in the absence of the Soviet threat, the West became noticeably less concerned with Turkey's security. In this situation, Ankara had to rethink the importance of the post-Soviet space for its national security.

This article is an attempt to clarify the nature of Turkey's security interests and the way they are related to Central Eurasia,[1] Turkey's key security interests in the region, and the specifics of its security policy.

[1] Here I refer to the conception of Central Eurasia and Central Europe suggested by Eldar Ismailov, who counted three post-Soviet regions as part of Central Eurasia: Central Europe—Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine; the Central Caucasus—Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia; Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (for more detail, see: E.M. Ismailov, "Central Eurasia: Its Geopolitical Function in the 21st Century," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (50), 2008, pp. 7-29).

Geographical Links and Their Specifics

Turkey's immediate land contacts with Central Eurasia are limited to the Central Caucasus: it borders on the three Central Caucasian states. Its land border in the region is about 535 km long, 20 percent of the total length of its land borders. The Black Sea separates Turkey from Central Europe.

The very different nature of Turkey's borders with the Central Caucasus and Central Europe makes it hard to identify their comparative importance for Ankara's security interests. Geography points to the former as a more important neighbor: first, land borders promote ethnic and confessional interaction between those living on both sides of the border and the adjacent areas, which makes security a common cause. Second, Turkey borders on the three Central Caucasian states, while its nearest Central European neighbor (Ukraine) is found across the sea. This means that the social components of the shared security interests play an important role in Turkey's relations with the Central Caucasian states and are absent in its relations with Central Europe.

On the other hand, in the Black Sea Turkey comes into a direct contact with Russia's Navy (the main base of which is found in Ukrainian territory), a military mechanism powerful enough to threaten Turkey's Black Sea coast.

The Black Sea Space

The Black Sea can be described as the main space which not merely offers geographic contacts, but also connects Turkish and Central European security interests. The Turkish Black Sea coast (which goes along the northern part of the country and stretches about 1,600 km) is obviously longer than Turkey's land border with the three Central Caucasian states, Iran, Greece, and Bulgaria. The sea's relatively small area (about 580 km at the widest spot) makes the threat of aggression rather high. Therefore, Turkey has to keep considerable naval forces in the Black Sea.

With the Soviet Union out of the game, Turkey found itself in a more favorable situation from the military point of view, yet it faces three new rivals—the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Georgia. This did nothing for its vulnerable northern part. In mid-1994, Head of the Turkish General Staff Doğan Güreş came forward with the following: "Russia, because of its policies in the Caucasus and Crimea, posed a greater threat to Turkey than at any time in the Cold War."[2] In the 2000s, Turkey's economic cooperation with Russia, their more or less similar position on the Middle East, as well as shared criticism of Western policy in the region somewhat defused the tension created by their military-political rivanry in the Black Sea. The two countries' domestic policy, however, can be described as conducive to much fiercer rivalry.

Russia has already embarked on the road toward restoring its Great Power status; this is amply confirmed by its rigidly centralized power, anti-Western rhetoric, building up the army and demonstration of its potential (the 2008 August war with Georgia), and reliance on economic and energy instruments to promote its geopolitical goals. The nature of Russia's advance along the chosen road will determine the nature of its relations wivh other powers, including Turkey (rivalry with which goes back into history).[3] Turkey, on the other hand, is undecided about its future: it has to choose between

[2] Quoted from: G. Winrow, *Turkey and the Caucasus: Domestic Interests and Security Concerns*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 2000, p. 23.

[3] Very much like the RF, Turkey has a rich Great Power past and traditions that still survive in particular from its domination in the Black Sea, which it strove to make an "inner sea." The 500 year-long history of their relations is dotted with wars, many of them waged in the Black Sea. This has inevitably created fairly stable ideas about each other which can be described as hostile and competitive rather than friendly and cooperating.

the Kemalist course (as part of the West) and its own past as an independent power with special interests in the Islamic and Turkic world. This means that the future of the currently warm relations between the two countries is fairly vague.

The Caucasus and the Caspian

At all times, the Caucasus was and remains an important element of Turkey's national security; the role of the Central Caucasian states in this respect is even greater than that of Central Europe for the following reasons:

- first, Armenia's potential territorial claims[4];
- second, the Kurdish question and Kurdish separatism encouraged by third countries in Turkish territory; and
- third, the social, axiological, and economic aspects of Turkey's relations with the Turkic peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia: Ankara needs unhampered access to the Turkic world, which should be kept out of other powers' control. Today, independent Azerbaijan, strengthened by its cooperation with Georgia, plays this role.[5]

Relations with Armenia

Early in the 1990s, Turkey was one of the first to recognize Armenia's independence; today, however, the two countries have no diplomatic relations, while their common border remains closed. Their old problems were revived when the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict escalated and Armenia occupied part of the territory of Azerbaijan.

Ankara insists that Armenia should meet certain conditions (drop its demand that Turkey should recognize the 1915 Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire, back off from its territorial claims with respect to Turkey, and retreat from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan) before the two countries establish official relations.

Admission of the Armenian genocide (on which the large Armenian diaspora has been insisting for a long time now) cannot directly affect Turkey's central security interests; however the history of relations between the two countries confirms that the problem is connected with more important political, financial, and territorial issues. Ankara is very concerned about the possible territorial claims of so-called Western Armenia,[6] which is situated in the eastern, Caucasian, part of present-day Turkey. Turkey's apprehensions are fed by the Declaration of Independence of Armenia adopted by its Supreme Soviet on 23 August, 1990, Point 11 of which says: "The Republic of Armenia stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia."[7] Moreover, the Preamble to the 1995 Constitution of Armenia confirms that

[4] See: S.E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus,* Curzon Press, 2001, p. 392.

[5] Ibidem.

[6] The territory of the Ottoman Empire populated by Armenians covers the contemporary vilayets of Erzurum, Van, Aðri, Hakkâri, Mush, Bitlis, Siirt, Diyarbakir, Erzincan, Bingöl, Malatya, Sivas, Amasya, Tokat and partly Giresun (see: *Istoria Osmanskogo gosudarstva, obshchestva i tsivilizatsii*, Vol. 1, ed. by E. Ihsanoglu, Transl. from the Turkish, Vostochnaia literatura Publishers, Moscow, 2006, p. 87).

[7] [http://www.armeniaforeignministry.com/htms/doi.html].

the Constitution is based on "the fundamental principles of Armenian statehood and the national aspirations engraved in the Declaration of Independence of Armenia."[8]

The territorial claims looked possible rather than probable because post-Soviet Armenia never stopped discussing them. "Back in the early 1990s, when global geopolitical changes were still barely visible, the Armenian public became concerned once more with the Moscow Treaty and demanded its revision… In 1953, Moscow prohibited Armenia, not for the first time, from making territorial claims (with respect to Turkey.—*J.E.*). As the ideological stereotypes of the Soviet period waned, the Armenian press started running more or less regular publications which described the 1921 Moscow Treaty as an act of Bolshevik perfidy which deprived Armenia of a large chunk of its territory."[9]

The war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh initiated by Erevan, which resorted to all possible means and methods (including a military-political alliance with the Russian Federation and tapping the potential of the Armenian diaspora in the West), was practical confirmation of the fact that the territorial issues remain as urgent as ever and that corresponding political moves cannot be excluded.

The Russian-Georgian war of 2008 was responsible for certain positive shifts in the relations between Turkey and Armenia, but complete normalization has not yet been achieved. The process launched by President of Armenia Serzh Sargsian, who invited President of Turkey Abdullah Gül to attend a football match between the two countries' national teams in September 2008, and the protocols which envisaged restoring diplomatic relations and opening the border signed in October 2009 in Zurich by the foreign ministers of both countries were nothing more than a geopolitical game Russia, Turkey, and the West were waging in Central Eurasia in the wake of the August 2008 war. This explains the stagnation (to put it mildly) in Armenian-Turkish relations which coincided with the end of the international storm raised by the Caucasian war and relative stabilization of the regional balance of power. The Zurich protocols remained on paper.

The Kurdish Question

Kurdish separatists, who are fighting for an independent Kurdish state in the historical homeland of the Kurds in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, can be described as another threat to Turkey's security. Most ethnic Kurds live in eastern Turkey, which borders on the Central Caucasus; this is the main territory of historical Kurdistan. From time to time, the Turkish authorities had to use military force to quench the Kurds' terrorist ardor; late in the 1970s, the scattered separatist groups joined forces in the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) responsible for over 30 thousand deaths.[10]

The Kurdish question is no less important for Turkey's security than the Armenian: the related external and internal actors threaten Turkey's continued existence. As far as the internal threat is concerned in the Kurdish case, the external influence is no less obvious here, and, moreover, the fairly rich history of conflict relations between the ethnic Kurds and the Turks[11] and the external support of Kurdish separatists are also evident.

The history of wars between the Russian and Ottoman empires abounds in cases where Russia exploited the separatist sentiments among the Kurds to undermine its opponent; the attempts were

[8] [http://www.armeniaforeignministry.com/htms/conttitution.html].

[9] *Turtsia mezhdu Evropoi i Aziey. Itogi evropeizatsii na iskhode XX veka*, ed. by N.G. Kireev, Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS-Kraft+, Moscow, 2001, p. 365.

[10] See: A. Cohen, C. Irwin, "U.S. Strategy in the Black Sea Region," *Heritage Foundation, Backgrounder*, No. 1990, 13 December, 2006, p. 4, available at [http://www.heritage.org/research/russiaandeurasia/upload/bg_1990.pdf].

[11] The first attempts to set up a Kurdish independent state date back to the 19th century; it was in the Ottoman Empire that the armed clashes produced numerous casualties (the riots in 1842-1847; 1854-1855; 1880; 1909-1914; 1919, etc.).

especially obvious in the 19th century when the Ottoman Empire weakened.[12] The situation changed but little when the Republic of Turkey and the Soviet Union replaced the empires. Guided by the Cold War logic, the Kremlin relied on Kurdish separatism, among other things, to undermine the "southern flank" of NATO, of which Turkey was a member. In the 1970s, the Soviet Union began using the Kurdish card even more actively.

The end of the Cold War did little to defuse external tension; the Kurdish factor was still as widely used as ever. The Russian Federation[13] was not alone; Syria was not alien to exploiting it in its regional policy; and Iran used it in the context of geopolitical rivalry in the Caucasus.[14]

In 1999, when the Turkish special services had arrested and isolated PKK leader Öcalan, the wave of separatism subsided somewhat to rise again when the United States and its allies invaded Iraq. The Hussein regime, which kept the lid on Kurdish separatism in Iraq, was a de facto ally of Ankara.[15] With Hussein out of the way, the Kurds spread their control across the country's northern part to create an "Iraqi foothold" to threaten Turkey. "The establishment of a de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq under Western protection gave new impetus to Kurdish nationalism and provided a logistical base for attacks on Turkish territory by the Kurdistan Workers' Party…"[16]

There is another link between Turkey's security and the Central Caucasus, viz. the "Kurdish factor" of Armenia. The far from simple relations between the two states suggest that Erevan could have pooled forces with Kurdish separatists and could have relied on the Kurdish issue to settle scores with Ankara. History and geography, however, do not permit this: throughout its post-Soviet history, Armenia has been demonstrating a lot of caution in dealing with the Kurdish question for geographical and historical reasons.

- First, the territory which Armenians call Western Armenia is claimed by the Kurdish separatists as Turkish Kurdistan, which means that both nations regard the same patch of the Turkish territory as their historical homeland. The Kurds, who comprise about 1.3 percent of Armenia's population, are the republic's second largest ethnic group.[17] Almost the only difference between the Turkish and Armenian Kurds is in religion: the former are Muslim Sunnis, while the latter are Yezidi. In other words, the territory which ethnic Kurds claim as Kurdistan is not limited to the four Middle Eastern states mentioned above: it can be stretched to Armenia. This means that Erevan will hardly hail the idea of a single Kurdish state.
- Second, the past was far from peaceful because both nations claimed the same part of Ottoman territory as their homeland. Pogroms and bloodshed were common enough, their frequency

[12] This was done, in particular, during the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829 (see: J.F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, Longmans, Green and Co., 1908, pp. 200-201).

[13] Post-Soviet Russia explained its support of Kurdish separatists by Turkey's policy in the Northern Caucasus and, in particular, its support of the Chechen separatists (see N. Uslu, "The Russian, Caucasian and Central Asian Aspects of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post Cold War Period," *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 3&4, Fall&Winter 2003, p. 166).

[14] Ankara regarded unofficial Syrian and Iranian support of Kurdish separatism in Turkey as a threat to its security. Turkey's response was harsh. In October 1998, Turkey threatened Syria with invasion if it refused to deport PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan (he and several thousand fighters of the Movement had found shelter in this country in 1979). In July 1999, Turkey did not hesitate to bomb the areas bordering on Iran and Iraq studded with PKK fighters' camps (see, for example: R. Olson, "Turkey-Iran Relations, 1997 to 2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Questions," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 5, 2000, pp. 878-879; I.O. Lesser, "Turkey in a Changing Security Environment," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Fall 2000, p. 185; G. Winrow, op. cit., p. 23; L. Martin, "Turkey's National Security in the Middle East," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2000, pp. 84-85).

[15] See, for example: Î. Zhigalina, "The Kurds of Western Asia: Geopolitics Today," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 1 (19), 2003, p. 19.

[16] S.F. Larrabee, "Turkey Rediscovers the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2007, available at [http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20070701faessay86408-p10/f-stephen-larrabee/turkey-rediscovers-the-middle-east.html].

[17] See: *CIA World Factbook 2010. Armenia*, available at [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/am.html].

and ferocity reaching their peak when central power loosened its grip on both nations. This was especially obvious during the Russo-Turkish wars of the latter half of the 19th century[18] and until 1915 when what Armenians prefer to describe as genocide took place.

A Kurdish state will not merely deprive the Armenians of a chance to expand its territory at Turkey's expense; it will probably claim part of Armenian territory, a hardly welcome prospect. This means that if aggravated, the Kurdish factor will become one of the few issues around which Ankara and Erevan can close ranks to protect their security.

Access to the Turkic World: Ideological and Energy Issues

There is another aspect of the security concerns Turkey shares with the Central Caucasus: the social, axiological, and economic dimensions of stable relations with the post-Soviet Turkic states that should be kept out of third countries' control. The idea of Turkish leadership in the Turkic world goes back into the past; the end of the Cold War revived it as an element of public sentiments[19] and an important part of Turkey's security, which depends, among other things, on its relations with the Central Caucasus and Central Asia.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw many changes in Turkey's foreign policy context and the situation at home: the relations between the West and the Soviet Union were less strained than before. As soon as the U.S.S.R. exited the stage, the West lost much of its geopolitical interest in Turkey. With the NATO southern flank more or less secure, there was no need to incorporate Turkey into the political system of the European democracies: "Suddenly, the Soviet threat had receded, and the future of the NATO alliance and Turkey's role within it became uncertain. This sense of insecurity (in Turkey.—*J.E.*) was compounded by the decision of the European Community to reject flatly Turkey's application for membership in 1989."[20] Ankara had to adjust its strategy in all spheres (security being one of them) to the new reality—the process is still going on.

The post-Cold War reality cast doubt, for the first time in the country's modern history, on its Kemalist choice. Kemal Atatürk wanted to see Turkey a European country that embraced Western values and was part of the West, rather than the leader of the Turkic and Islamic world living on the Great Power ideas of the Ottoman Empire. The European community, which in 1989 rejected Turkey's membership, delivered a painful blow to the Kemalist ideas and strengthened the position of those who favored the Great Power course and leadership in the Turkic and Islamic world.

At that time, the Turkish political elite and President Özal seemed determined to revise the Kemalist approaches to the country's Eurasian status. The new trends particularly affected Turkey's relations with the newly independent Turkic states and the Russian Federation.

Mustafa Kemal, the founding father of the Republic of Turkey, wanted much more ramified and closer relations with the West and the republic's political, economic, cultural, and axiological integration into Europe. He played down the country's special role in the history of Eurasia, shunned the previously popular pan-Turkic designs in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and attached special importance to normal relations with the Soviet Union.[21] President Turgut Özal never publicly doubted

[18] See: *Istoria Osmanskogo gosudarstva, obshchestva i tsivilizatsii,* p. 88.

[19] See: R. Burnashev, "Regional Security in Central Asia: Military Aspects," in: *Central Asia. A Gathering Storm?* Ed. by B. Rumer, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2002, p. 132.

[20] L. Ruseckas, "Turkey and Eurasia: Opportunities and Risks in the Caspian Pipeline Derby," *Journal of International Affairs,* Vol. 54, No. 1, Fall 2000, p. 219.

[21] See: Ibid., p. 220.

Turkey's European vector, but he obviously tried to revise the ideas about the post-Soviet space: "Following the Soviet Union's collapse, the Caucasus and Central Asia became the focal point of Turkey's diplomatic efforts, peaking in the early 1990s. Turkey tried to capitalize on the strong cultural and linguistic bonds with the new republics. The increasing interest of the Turkish state in the region was symbolized by the formation of the 'Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency' (TIKA) and the organization of annual summits involving the presidents of Turkey and the Turkic Republics, the very first of which was held in Ankara in October 1992."[22] The Turkish political elite even started talking about the Turkic Soviet successor-states as the Turkey's Near Abroad.[23]

In the post-Özal period, Turkey somewhat reduced its activities in the south of the post-Soviet space; later the Turkish leaders made it a point to tread cautiously with an eye on Russia's interests and traditional regional role. Geographical location and the economy can be described as two equally important factors: in the absence of a land border with Central Asia, Turkey could hardly effectively promote its influence in the region.[24] Impressive under Özal, in the post-Özal period Turkey's economic growth was dampened by a series of economic crises.

Because of its security interests Turkey remains as interested as ever in the Central Caucasus, which gives Ankara access to Central Asia, another focal point of its interests. There is any number of reasons to believe that in the future Turkey's security interests in Central Asia and the related need to maintain the Caucasian "geopolitical bridge" will become even more important. This all depends on Turkey's EU membership, the prospect of which is barely looming on the horizon. The growing conviction that Turkey will be left out of the European Union will invigorate the Turkic-Islamic social and axiological ideas and the related Great Power traditions and geopolitical principles. Back in the 1990s, Zbigniew Brzezinski quite rightly wrote with a great deal of perspicacity: "If Turkey feels like a European outcast, it will become more Islamic and less likely to cooperate with the West in integrating Central Asia into the world community."[25]

The political processes very much evident in Turkey since the mid-1990s make this prospect possible: witness the much greater role of Islam in the country's politics. In 1996, the coalition government was headed by Nijmeddin Erbakan, leader of the pro-Islamic Turkish Prosperity Party, who had to leave the post under strong pressure from the military. In 2002-2003, Abdullah Gül of the pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party was elected prime minister. The 2007 parliamentary elections brought its leader Tayyip Rejep Erdoğan the post of prime minister, while later that year Abdullah Gül won the presidential election. In other words, today the pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party, represented at the top by two of its members, rules the country.

The drift toward Islam is confirmed by the changes in Turkey's policy. Put in a nutshell, this can be described as leaving the geopolitical orbit of the West for the sake of an independent geopolitical strategy amply confirmed by Ankara's active position during and after the Russian-Georgian war of 2008: it limited access of American warships to the Black Sea,[26] formulated the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform,[27] and raised the degree of its criticism of Israel's policy in Palestine.[28]

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[22] Z. Onis, "Turkey and Post-Soviet States: Potential and Limits of Regional Power Influence," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Summer 2001, p. 67.

[23] See: L. Ruseckas, op. cit.

[24] See: N. Uslu, op. cit., p. 182; R. Sokolsky, T. Charlick-Paley, *NATO and Caspian Security. A Mission Too Far?* Rand Corporation, Washington, 1999, p. 42.

[25] Z. Brzezinski, "A Geostrategy for Eurasia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 5, September/October 1997, p. 57.

[26] Turkey relied on the Montreux Convention of 1936 to limit the access of U.S. warships, meant to put pressure on the Kremlin during the 2008 war, to the Black Sea.

[27] The pivotal point is that the regional problems should be addressed by the region's states—Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Turkey.

[28] The tension between Israel and Turkey increased in June 2010 when Israeli warships arrested six ships of the so-called Flotilla of Freedom determined to break the blockade of Gaza; there were Turkish citizens among the 20 casualties. Ankara accused Tel-Aviv of interfering with the Middle East settlement; it recalled its ambassador, initiated discussion in the U.N. SC, and called off joint military exercises.

There is another, no less important, aspect of the security interests Turkey shares with the Central Caucasus and Central Asia: it depends on imported oil and gas for the simple reason that its own energy potential is too small to feed the rapidly growing economy.

In search of energy security, Turkey is seeking more active involvement in these two former Soviet regions: late in 1990s and early 2000s, Turkey was involved in the oil- and gas pipeline projects which crossed Azerbaijan and Georgia to bring Caspian oil from Baku to Ceyhan via Tbilisi and Caspian gas from Baku to Erzurum also via the Georgian capital.

Turkey's interests in the post-Soviet Caucasus were not limited to access to Azerbaijan's oil and gas. According to B. Aras, Ankara wants guaranteed access to vitally important energy resources, transit revenues, and new markets for Turkish goods, especially in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan.[29]

Stronger Great Power sentiments inside the country make a Caucasian-Caspian energy bridge outside the spheres of influence of all other Eurasian centers of power critically important. We all know that any power depends on long-term economic self-sufficiency (particularly in the energy sphere) for its geopolitical independence and ability to protect its interests beyond its borders: there is no other road to geopolitical autonomy. So far, Turkey cannot be described as self-sufficient in the energy sphere. What is more, Russia and Iran, its closest geopolitical rivals, have much larger amounts of energy resources[30]; this makes them economically more independent of other states/powers, their oil and gas serving as the basis of their economic growth and independent geopolitical activity. Turkey, on the other hand, cannot compete with them in this respect; its economy depends, to a certain extent, on their hydrocarbon reserves,[31] which makes it relatively vulnerable and limits its geopolitical competitiveness.

This means that Turkey should look for alternative (outside Russian and Iranian control) energy resources. The Caspian is one of the answers. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to a certain extent can remedy the situation with the help of the Georgia-Azerbaijan "trans-regional bridge."

This also means that Turkey's interest presupposes if not a common then at least a closely interrelated understanding of the Central Caucasus and Central Asia: the transit advantages of the former are indispensable for Turkey, which needs the latter's energy resources. With the still smoldering conflict in Armenia where the Kremlin's influence is relatively strong, Turkey should rely on an alliance with Georgia and Azerbaijan to realize the idea of a Caucasian-Caspian bridge to Central Asia.

The Caucasian Diaspora

Certain ethnic groups (the Circassian, Abkhazian, Chechen, Georgian, etc. diasporas in Turkey) may stimulate securitization of the Caucasian issues in Turkey. These nationalities have preserved contacts with their historical homelands and know why their ancestors, at one time, had to emigrate, which means that their activities and impact on Ankara should not be treated lightly. George Hewitt has written in this respect: "The presence, predominantly in Turkey of a huge N(W) Caucasian diaspora is an impor-

[29] See: B. Aras, "Turkey's Policy in the Former Soviet South: Assets and Options," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 2000, p. 39.

[30] Russia possesses 5.6% of the world's oil reserves, while Iran has 10.3%; Russia has 23.7% of the world's reserves of natural gas, while Iran has 15.8% (see: *BP Statistical Review of World Energy*, June 2010, pp. 6, 22, available at [http://www.bp.com/liveassets/bp_internet/globalbp/globalbp_uk_english/reports_and_publications/statistical_energy_review_2008/STAGING/local_assets/2010_downloads/statistical_review_of_world_energy_full_report_2010.pdf]).

[31] Turkey imports about 60% of the gas it needs from Russia (see: A. Murinson, "Russia's Use of the Montreux Convention as a Factor in its New Policy toward Turkey," *Azerbaijan in the World*, ADA Biweekly Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 18, 15 October, 2008, p. 8, available at [http://www.ada.edu.az/files/beweekly/26/ADA%20Biweekly_Vol.%201_No.%2018.pdf]).

tant but largely neglected factor in the appreciation of regional affairs."[32] The 2008 August Russian-Georgian crisis, which changed the geopolitical context, and Moscow's recognition of South Ossetian and Abkhazian independence, added weight to this factor of Turkey's Caucasian policy.

It was the Russian Empire's Caucasian wars of the 19th century that caused the active outflow of the North Caucasian peoples accompanied by vigorous resettlement policy: Muslims were replaced by Christians (Armenians and Cossacks). The Soviet Union followed suit. The most glaring example of this is the deportation in 1943-1944 of the Chechens, Ingushes, Karachais, Balkars, and Meskhetian Turks to Kazakhstan and Siberia. "The official reason given for the deportation was 'collaboration with the Nazis'."[33]

In the post-Cold War period, the Turkish citizens of North Caucasian origin (there are about 7 million of them[34]) can see that violence in their historical land has not subsided. Armed conflicts in the post-Soviet Caucasus created new waves of migrants, some of them reaching Turkey. Here I have in mind the two Russian-Chechen wars which created the worst humanitarian catastrophe of the post-Soviet period in the Northern Caucasus. This post-Soviet experience cannot but add elements of hostility to the historic memory of the Caucasian peoples residing in the Russian Federation and outside it (in Turkey and the Middle East).

Conclusion

Turkey's security interests are closely connected with Central Eurasia and functional in stimulating its corresponding policy. This interconnection rests on their geographical proximity, ethnoconfessional commonality, and Turkey's rich history of relations with the regional peoples and neighboring powers (including its Great Power traditions based on history of its domination over the region). They can be described as the most important factors behind the functional interconnection. The Soviet threat, the key Cold War issue, has abated, but the post-bipolar world (and its post-Soviet segment) cannot be described as Turkey's stable geopolitical milieu.

On the whole, Turkey profited from the changed balance of power in the Black Sea brought about by the Soviet Union's disintegration, yet its Black Sea coast remains as vulnerable as ever. Turkey's security depends on the nature of its relations with Russia: if the current positive trends, mainly in the economy (trade, tourism, energy), survive, they will reduce, to a certain extent, the military-political rivalry between the two countries (in the Black Sea among other places), which will make Turkey more secure.

If Russia persists in restoring its Great Power status, Turkey will become more vulnerable than ever. If the restored status proves stable enough, if it brings dividends, and if it develops into a consolidating idea in Russia, its rivalry with Turkey in the Black Sea and the Caucasian-Caspian area will become even more pronounced. This will affect two other security-related segments Turkey shares with Central Eurasia: relations with Armenia and the Kurdish question.

The activity of the large Caucasian diaspora and Ankara's ideological and energy interests related to establishing stable geopolitical contacts with the Turkic Central Asian states beyond the control of third countries can spur securitization of Caucasian issues in Turkey. The Central Asian vector will probably intensify as Turkey moves closer to the status of a Eurasian power in its own right.

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[32] G. Hewitt, "Abkhazia, Georgia and the Circassians (NW Caucasus)," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 18, Issue 4, 1999, p. 466.
[33] A. Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1998, p. 316.
[34] See: G. Winrow, op. cit., p. 32.