

Nasihatname-i Durust:

“Measured Advice” for Turkish Foreign Policy
in a Rapidly Changing World

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Abstract: Can Turkish foreign policy deliver a more prosperous, stable, and empowering future for millions of individuals both at home and in the surrounding region? Turkish diplomacy has tried many alternatives over the years, from World War II neutrality, to active NATO participation, to European Union solicitation. Each of these strategic orientations made sense in their time, and exhibited a savvy awareness of whom to support during a brutally violent century. However, as a new century matures, it is again time for Turkey to set out with willing partners on the long path toward a fresh framework. At this point, Turkish officials should work to strengthen bonds in all directions, continuing to operate to the extent possible under the vision of “zero problems,” searching for opportunities to foster mutual advantage with all sovereign states, and working to overcome the ghosts of the past. Considering the regional constructions reviewed here, the guiding principles should be that the sum is stronger than its parts, organic growth is better than sudden expansion, and future stability and prosperity should be based on policy ingredients already present. In the spirit of classical policy advice literature, after surveying various options for addressing today’s challenges, this humble servant suggests a multi-lateral regional framework of political cooperation, economic integration, and strategic breadth. To preserve geographic flexibility, terminological simplicity, geographic ambiguity, and institutional self-confidence, one might refer to this proposed entity as a “Central Union.”

Key Words: Turkish Foreign Policy, stability and prosperity, multi-lateral regional cooperation, Central Union.

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Introduction

Hasan Durust drives, a lot. As an independent driver and small business owner, Hasan has driven at least one of his three trucks from Germany to Iran, and Georgia to Egypt. He knows the routes emanating from and passing through Anatolia better than Ibn Battuta (d. ca. 1368), who traversed many of these same routes eight centuries ago. Like Ibn Battuta before him, Mr. Durust harbors concerns both mundane and sublime as he crisscrosses the modern trade routes of Eurasia. Where are the fuel stations? How long must he wait at the border? Will customs officers again demand a cut of the cargo's value for his poor man's *laissez passer*? Are there bandits on this road? Will that government ever treat its people well? After 25 years on the road, Hasan has learned that business challenges constantly change guises and evolve, and he has figured out what he wants from Turkish foreign policy. As officials entrusted with management of Turkish foreign policy search for guidance on policy goals and prescriptions, they could do worse than keeping Mr. Durust's view from the ground in mind when contemplating regional possibilities and policy strategies.

In a constantly changing world, standing still is rarely a formula for success. To paraphrase Ibn Khaldun's (d. 1406) cyclical theory of political sociology, stasis does not exist in diplomacy – a group not ascending is descending. The power constellations which preserved stability for decades now appear to be losing their *'asabiyya*, or collective will and momentum. As power abhors a vacuum, and prosperity cannot remain secure amidst chaos, there are no easy guarantees for the future. Some challenges are global and environmental, such as projected water deprivation, peak oil, climate change, or overpopulation. Others are distant, abstract, and completely man made, such as the predicted demise of yesterday's unitary superpower and emergence of a multi-polar world, the end of the dollar's domination as a world currency, or the global concentration of capital. Still others are regional and seemingly intractable, such as chronic water shortages in the Tigris-Euphrates river basin, irreconcilable differences between opposing national movements, or nuclear tensions between rival powers. To assist Mr. Durust with the impact of such larger issues on his life and livelihood, Turkish offi-

cials should act creatively within a multi-lateral regional framework of political cooperation, economic integration, and strategic breadth.

How can foreign policy deliver a more prosperous, stable, and empowering future for Hasan and millions like him not only in Turkey, but in the surrounding region as a whole? Turkish diplomacy has tried many alternatives over the years, from World War II neutrality, to active NATO participation, to European Union (EU) solicitation. Each of these strategic decisions made a certain amount of sense in their own day, and exhibited a savvy awareness of whom to support during a brutally violent century. However, as a new century approaches puberty, perhaps it is time for Turkey to set out with willing partners on the long path toward a fresh framework, creating a shining light of peace and prosperity on a hilltop of regional cooperation.

Back when the Ottoman Empire played a powerful role in European diplomacy, it became common practice for newly retired *viziers* and recently pensioned *paşas* wary of their reputation to simultaneously defend their legacy and apply for higher posts by authoring advice treatises known as *nasihatnames*. An early modern equivalent to think tank products, these advice treatises tended to gaze longingly to an imagined glorious past while arguing for ways to return to that past. While this offering advocates no such return, it does refer to that tradition in order to search for a secure future for Turkey and its interlocutors. As a modest proposal of “measured advice,” or a *Nasihatname-i Durust*, this humble servant offers the Central Cooperative Union (CCU).

Turkey’s Role in the West – and the World

It is often said that Turkey is a “bridge between East and West.” Turkish society itself buys into this exhausted cliché, referenced in tourism brochures, corporate ad campaigns, and the two bridges which literally connect Europe to Asia. While it is true that Turkey is widely perceived as such a bridge, so might any location on the planet beyond the North or South Pole. The expression means nothing, outside of a geographically meaningless psychological construct advanced by those intent on carving out a space for a “West” and an “East.”

Regardless of geography, the umbrella bloc which has long impacted Turkey the most is usually described via the lazy shorthand of “the West.”

Particularly enthusiastic boosters occasionally mix references to this bloc with “the international community” or “the civilized world,” and it most closely corresponds to institutions such NATO and the European Union, with satellite membership conferred in descending degrees of condescension on Israel, Turkey, and OSCE members hailing from the former Soviet Union. When it suits this bloc’s controlling interests, distant entities in East Asia, Latin America, Oceania, and elsewhere can be invited into honorary, temporary, and ad-hoc association as well. Although parameters conferring membership status border on incoherence, with no single legal entity representing the bloc *per se*, it has nevertheless long represented the gold standard of power, influence, security, and wealth.

How does this mythical “West” perceive itself? According to standard Western Civilization textbooks, a civilizational impulse identified as “Western” somehow meandered from its Mesopotamian origins to Pharaonic Egypt, Ancient Greece, Rome, Byzantium, Medieval Europe, Renaissance Italy, Reformation Germany, Enlightenment England, Revolutionary France, and then the entire world following an Age of Discovery, Industrial Revolution, and highly contested Age of Imperialism. While newly inclusive textbook teams occasionally tip their hats to Russians, Poles, Irish, Scandinavians, and other groups on the margins, the trunk narrative remains consistent (Frankforter and Spellman, 2009).

Like Lewis Carroll imagining his Cheshire cat, historians have shape shifted this “West” all around Anatolia through the centuries, picking from the past whatever fragments of the Anatolian experience support their master narrative extolling the march of liberal democracy, human rights, and Western triumph. Does Turkey, or their Ottoman ancestors, have a place in this narrative? If so, it is not a privileged place. While both modern Turkey and early modern Ottomans merit mention here and there in this narrative, most references are marginal at best, and frequently hostile.

How does an empire which once ruled most of the Mediterranean basin, or a loyal NATO member since 1952, get airbrushed out of the Western narrative? While collective identities such as the “West” never stop evolving, one group intimately involved with the reality on the ground from the medieval period onwards clearly has no inclusive place in this narrative:

Muslims. Of course, neither do the indigenous peoples of the New World, East Asia, South Asia, or Sub-Saharan Africa (except as subalterns) – but these regions were less frequently direct interlocutors of the “West” as classically conceived. Even though much of Southeastern and Southwestern Europe (the Balkans and the Iberian Peninsula) had converted to Islam by the end of the 15th century, textbooks have long excluded these converted communities from the story of Western Civilization. Preserving this pristine historical conception sometimes necessitates absurd logical stretches, such as a 700 year long “*reconquista*,” or blaming the conversion of the majority of the populations of some 20% of Europe’s land mass to brute force alone.

As it turns out, aside from a brief Cold War interlude, Islam has usually constituted the “East” which the “West” defines itself against. To be fair, the same is true of opposing constructions of the “East.” In both cases, such conceptions of collective identity create unnecessary hostility and reaction from those defined as “other” – and any moves to counter such views would increase the prospects for regional peace, prosperity, and stability. Hostility manufactured within the framework of this combative “West vs. East” discourse has grown ever more extreme in the current generation, even driving a self-styled Norwegian representative of the Knights Templar to murder 77 of his countrymen in order to protect Western Civilization (Berwick, 2011).

The Turkey left behind by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (d. 1938) has long presented a conundrum for these narratives. Maturing in the era of Europe’s greatest global triumph, and coming to power in the immediate wake of the Great War which ensured European dominance in the formerly Ottoman Balkans and Arab world, republican Turkey’s founding father was determined to reach an advantageous arrangement with the powers of his day. Never suffering from timidity, the visionary president went for the cultural jugular with a series of reforms, most famously the 1928 language reform. With a stroke of his pen, months of heavy persuasion, some targeted coercion, and an army of well-paid teachers similarly motivated by his generation’s clear identification of “West” with “modern,” the Turkish state managed to completely reinvent its society’s means of communication, and thus identity, within a matter of months.

This language reform, frequently presented as a simple alphabet conver-

sion, signified far more, both within Turkey and among those who keep score on the game of “East vs. West.” By changing over from Arabic to Latin characters, Turkey in one stroke managed to identify itself culturally with Latin Christendom, portray each of its neighbors as more “Eastern” than itself, cut itself off from its own historical sources, render its older population illiterate, and privilege all youth and intellectuals who were prepared to buy into the cultural revolution. The reverberations of Atatürk’s steps toward a brave new world are very much with us to this day, and continue to color external perceptions of Turkey’s somewhat schizophrenic standing within both “West” and “East.”

Commentators these days frequently query “whither Turkey?” It is true, as some never tire to point out, that Turkey has seen in recent years a modest rise in religiosity, and a concurrent drop in the social legitimacy of secularism (Zaman, 2011). However, the broad accuracy of such changes begs the question of “why” as much as “whither” – as well as the role of the self-proclaimed and self-defined “West” in influencing these changes. Just as Atatürk’s reforms psychologically transformed Turkey into a bridgehead of the “West,” and his successors jumped on the chance to sign Turkey up as a member of NATO in 1952, moves by today’s leaders affect the great “East vs. West” debate. However, what has shifted beyond recognition is what these two imaginary poles have come to mean – and what that means for the average Turkish citizen. In the secular 1950s, being part of the “West” meant serving honorably on the front lines of the Cold War against a somewhat amorphous “godless Communism.” Today, it effectively means serving on Samuel Huntington’s civilizational “blood borders” against the threat of “militant Islam” (Huntington, 1993). For many Turks, such an agenda means denying their own cultural and religious heritage. Effectively, the “West” has meandered yet again, this time reverting to a definition of itself which no longer interests most Turks (Pamuk, 2010). Rather, many now tend to view this “West” as much a threat to themselves as to co-religionists in points south and east.

Keeping a close eye on Turkey is understandable, considering the country’s geo-strategic importance, location, and growing heft in world affairs. However, intriguing as the question of “whither Turkey” may be, it hardly

reflects the reality of Turkey today. Rather, one must delve inside this vibrant society of 75 million souls to discover the deeper reality of an evolving foreign policy, and national identity, striving to satisfy domestic priorities. While European and American analysts fret over Turkey's direction, its own population continues to fret over the sorts of things people elsewhere worry about – the reliability of their next paycheck, their ability to travel freely, and the value of their property. On the national level, urban gentrification, ethnic conflict expressed via street gangs, the government's neo-liberal economic strategy, freedom of speech within a rapidly changing political order, and the recent attempt to achieve “zero problems” with Turkey's neighbors are the sorts of debates that exercise Turkish citizens today. None of these issues lend themselves to a facile “East-West” paradigm.

The World According to Hasan

Hasan Durust has seen a lot of Eurasia hauling cargo. Along the way, he has formed strong opinions about some of the peoples and societies he has visited, and the legal obstacles which have cost his business dearly. As a successful foreign policy cannot ignore such perspectives, let us review the world according to Hasan, and Turkey.

The current AKP government has been striving for a policy of “zero problems” with all of Turkey's neighbors and regional counterparts. While this simple concept originated as a Foreign Ministry slogan, it has taken on a life of its own as a goal for many, in several spheres. It is ambitious, to be sure, because Turkey has had problems with each and every one of its neighbors at one time or another in the past century or so. However, to date the stars have aligned comparatively well, due to both the marked shift from previously aggressive Turkish foreign policy orientations and changes in regional realities. As a result, the bilateral relationship between Turkey and each of its neighbors is a vast improvement over a decade ago. While Turkey's relationships with Armenia and Cyprus continue to defy simple resolution, the border was until recently open to visa-free travel with Syria, Turkish investment dominates the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Northern Iraq, at least 50,000 Armenians are said to have migrated to Turkey in recent years, Turkey replaced the UAE last year as Iran's largest

trading partner, Georgia is practically an extension of the Turkish economy, Bulgaria is nearly as solicitous of Turkey as it is of the major EU powers, and Greece has become Turkey’s primary cheerleader within the EU.

In international affairs, blocs are a useful organizing mechanism, like gangs in a bar fight, or households in a tribal dispute. While conflict may not always define such relationships, one must always consider the makeup of such alliances, because even when such blocs negotiate over such mundane matters as customs regulations or highway signage, the mutual interests of such blocs never lie far below the surface of civility. To understand the world we tour, let us examine countries according to the blocs they follow, regional or otherwise.

Americans and Israelis

Within the umbrella “Western” bloc described above lie several sub-blocs of distinct significance. In terms of Turkey’s regional security architecture, by far the most influential actors have sprung from the American-Israeli partnership. While this relationship is subservient to NATO in its legal and strategic importance, it is a far more coherent informal alliance than NATO’s formal melding of American, Turkish, and European interests. This American-Israeli partnership in many ways resembles an “*ağabey-kardeş*” union between a larger and smaller brother, although it is not always clear which brother plays which role. This bilateral relationship tends to trump all others within the considerations of each country’s foreign policy, even though the legal standing of the relationship is barely detectable. For decades Turkey carefully tended a surrogate partnership with this brotherhood, offering use of its airspace and valuable air bases such as İncirlik and İzmir, participating in joint exercises such as “Anatolian Eagle,” investing in a “military industry cooperation agreement,” and joining regional operations when feasible (Ya’ar, 2010; Chossudovsky, 2006). The strength of this surrogate status peaked in 1999, when the tripartite coalition started to lose momentum after a joint military cooperation meeting at the Gölcük naval base was swallowed whole by the Marmara earthquake. Although a viable security partnership endures, following the political earthquake of 9/11, and the far more significant aftershocks of the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, the 2006 Israeli invasion of

Lebanon, the 2008-09 Israeli assault on Gaza, and the 2010 attack on the *Mavi Marmara*, Turkey's surrogate status of 1999 effectively exists no more.

The unraveling of this budding tripartite arrangement carries potentially serious implications for the region's security architecture, and has clearly unsettled several observers (Singh, 2010; Walker, 2010). In a frequently cited comment, last year Thomas Friedman stated that "Turkey's Islamist government [is] seemingly focused not on joining the European Union but the Arab League – no, scratch that, on joining the Hamas-Hezbollah-Iran resistance front against Israel" (Friedman, 2010). Whatever Washington commentators might think, however, there may be positive outcomes for Turkey in refraining from impetuous action on behalf of such unstable partners. Rather than privileging its special security relationship with these two powers at the expense of all other regional actors, Turkey now has an opportunity to set out on its own path, act as a truly neutral mediator in conflicts throughout the region, and interact with actors everywhere on a more equitable and independent basis.

An additional reason to reconsider Turkey's primary strategic alignment is that the United States may be on its way out as the dominant global power (McCoy, 2010). After allowing its industrial base to shrivel, concentrating most discretionary federal spending on its security industrial complex, slashing taxes for the wealthy, and under-investing in education and infrastructure, the U.S. now finds itself burdened by an industrial sector rarely identified with quality and innovation; an economy dependant on flipping burgers, marketing Chinese-made trinkets, and selling houses to one another; an infrastructure approaching third world status; an electorate barely capable of critical thought; and a colossal debt to China. While a few Americans are doing exceedingly well, the society as a whole is facing serious imbalances and social contradictions. Although the U.S. military continues to pack a mighty punch, at times the country as a whole resembles a dazed behemoth staring at the abyss within. While in such a perilous state, the U.S. may no longer suffice as Turkey's primary strategic partner. Since there is little that Turkey can do to help the U.S. recover from its domestic problems, perhaps it is time officials begin the painful process of delicately disentangling Turkey from the slow motion train wreck that is today's United States.

Israel, while still capable of exploiting its assets efficiently for a healthy economy, is also approaching a national dead end. As with the United States, most of Israel’s problems are long-term, and largely self-inflicted. As the world gradually loses patience with Israel’s treatment of the Palestinian population under its sovereign control, the embattled ethnocracy grows progressively more isolated (Yiftachel, 2006). At the same time, as demographic realities grow ever starker for ideological purists, the impossibility of continuing Herzl’s 19th century dream in its current expanded form grows ever clearer. Even so, like an addict in continuous denial, the Israeli political elite continues to pursue strategic delay tactics in the hope that some as yet unforeseen new reality might rescue the Israeli state from the necessity to either withdraw from territory occupied in 1967, or extend full citizenship rights to all individuals under their sovereign control. Turkey has long served as a nearby enabler to this national addiction for land, power, and domination, but now may finally be time to break the hard truth – Turkey can no longer support this mutually destructive habit.

Having had little contact with either, Hasan holds some animus against Americans and Israelis, largely springing from the construction of negative images which such distance foments. He has never been to either country, and in the current international framework, he is not likely to any time soon. While Israel might allow Turkish truckers access to its market and vice-versa, Israeli land borders, with the partial exceptions of those with Egypt and Jordan, are mostly closed, and when open used more for tourists, citizens, Palestinian *laissez-passer* holders, and other human traffic than for large scale trade. Of course, Hasan cannot drive to the United States, although with increased prosperity and more relaxed visa requirements he may someday hope to visit as a tourist. Anything foreign policy officials can do to reduce Israeli regional isolation or relax U.S. visa requirements for Turkish nationals could only be good news, not only for Hasan, but for those like him whose images are shaped by others in the absence of direct contact.

The European Union

To understand Mr. Durust’s perspective on the European Union, one might consult satirical maps purporting to show “Europe according to the Turks”

– not exactly a sanguine belief set. Like many other countries, Turkey has reason to be wary of (the rest of) Europe’s self-perceived role in the world. Barely a decade beyond a century in which two European wars caused the deaths of tens of millions of civilians, today’s European leaders once again believe in the righteousness of their civilizational framework (Ferguson, 20100). In spite of such collective hubris, the EU remains the most economically powerful, bureaucratically coherent, financially wealthy, and militarily stable cooperative governing institution of modern times. As such, Turkey’s longstanding aspiration to join this union is perfectly logical, and should remain a goal well into the future. However this relationship with the EU evolves, as Turkey sets out to build a better world in its own neighborhood, policymakers should never forget that the EU has provided several successful policy models to emulate.

While some commentators, most notably Thomas Friedman, have emphatically blamed Turkey for turning away from Europe, the initial break appears to have sprung from within the EU. First Germany’s Angela Merkel, then France’s Nicolas Sarkozy, began to speak forcefully against Turkey’s EU candidacy. Since 2005, the year Merkel was elected German chancellor and accession negotiations officially began, Turkish frustration with the EU has grown palpable, and foreign policy officials have decided to look elsewhere for policy advancement. Concurrent with the distinct lack of enthusiasm within the EU for admitting one of its oldest suitors has been a decline in interest among both the Turkish public and its leaders. Support for EU membership amongst the Turkish public has slipped from 68% in 2005 to 54% in 2010, and the domestic reforms initially pushed by EU officials as the price for admission have taken on their own momentum within the domestic arena (Aslan, 2010). Likewise, economic relations have slipped, as the EU’s share of total Turkish exports has fallen from 56.5% in 2002 to 46.3% in 2010 (Öztürk, 2011).

The EU should be seen as a process aiming to cement regional stability through democratization, prosperity, and mutual co-dependence. If approached as a process rather than a final goal in and of itself, then the constant redefinition of the EU grows less problematic for external suitors like Turkey, Albania, Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia, and others. If seen as a goal, then the highly problematic accession of Bulgaria and Romania, which

greatly diluted the union’s legal uniformity and bureaucratic coherence, can only offend a frustrated suitor like Turkey with a patently stronger state system and economy. When approached as a process, however, then the fact that Turkey instituted dozens of EU-initiated reforms in the past decade is a positive whether or not it results in actual EU membership. In addition, when viewed as a process, then any emulation of EU models for other actors can be appreciated as an advance for all.

As the EU remains Turkey’s most important institutional counterpart, officials must remain engaged. Addressing complex issues of foreign trade, immigration, diaspora communities, tourism, banking coordination, and market regulation is never simple. That said, in the midst of such continuing engagement, the correct approach to the EU in the near future might be best exemplified by resignation and acceptance, as in Groucho Marx’s classic passive-aggressive quip: “I don’t care to belong to any club that will have me as a member.”

As dangerous as anti-immigrant sentiment and Islamophobia have grown in Europe, as difficult as the Turkish-EU relationship has become, as worried as each party remains about the other’s intentions, the outlook is not entirely bleak. First of all, while the European Union is highly effective as a regulatory bureaucracy, it is far less coherent as a foreign policy bloc. Surprisingly less coherent than the exceedingly far flung NATO, the EU might best be approached via its members directly – especially since the EU may be showing signs of institutional incoherence in the face of a mounting financial crisis. Following this approach, one quickly realizes that there are as many divisions within the EU as there are between the bloc and external parties. One also realizes that Turkey has nearly as many policy friends within the bloc as enemies, and that such friendships tend to be driven by issues, thus ad-hoc and rarely permanent. Once again, sub-blocs matter as much as umbrella blocs.

The most fraught relations have developed with France and Germany, the lynchpins of European unity throughout most of the postwar period. In France’s case, the difficulties have originated from the political elite as much as from the population at large. Although anti-immigrant sentiment is high in France, their wrath is directed elsewhere, largely aimed at populations who remind Gallic French of the legacy of their republican imperial-

ism in a post-colonial age. The political elite, from First Lady Mitterand to President Sarkozy, have harbored hostility to Turkey that in many ways is as much personality as policy driven. Outside of the Armenian question, there is not much that need keep France and Turkey permanently at odds. Continuing engagement with French society, working to solve the Armenian impasse with the Armenian government and other interlocutors, and awaiting new French leadership may be the best option for Turkey at this point.

Germany is far more complicated, where some 3.5 million migrants and their offspring originate from Turkey. While the relationship has resembled a dysfunctional partnership since at least the late 19th century, the dynamics of today's Turkish-German relationship now seem to resemble a meeting of bitter former lovers. Unlike France, however, Turkish politicians carry nearly as much leverage within German society as the reverse. At the same time, however, unlike the U.S., Germany is a rising economic power with leverage throughout the EU, and the relationship must be managed with the utmost care and sensitivity – especially as Germany continues to pay the national equivalent of child support to maintain other dysfunctional partnerships with Ireland, Greece, Spain, Italy, and Portugal. For lack of a better immediate strategy, Turkish officials should continue to engage with Germany at the highest levels while striving to improve their bargaining position outside and beyond the parameters of the relationship.

The United Kingdom has harbored a peculiarly strong Turcophobia since at least Lord Byron's call to support the 1821 Greek rebellion, and certainly since Lord Gladstone's 1876 pamphlet, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Questions of the East* (Gladstone, 1876). In spite of such historic aversion, Britain has been more encouraging of Turkish membership in the EU than most. Even though this support seems intended more to weaken EU institutions through enlargement than to assist Turkey's prosperity or development, the support is welcome all the same. Beyond that support, there is not much that Turkey might want from the British government, other than a more open visa policy. These days the British consulate in Istanbul appears determined to discourage legal travel of Turkish citizens to Britain under any auspices. However, as Turkey's bargaining position vis-à-vis the United Kingdom improves, this policy outlook may evolve accordingly.

Another major interlocutor for Turkey within the EU is Greece. While relations between Greeks and Turks go back centuries, and have endured some famously rough patches, during the modern era the two societies have never been closer than in the past decade. Starting with mutual earthquake assistance in 1999, two countries which nearly went to war over an uninhabited Aegean islet in 1997 have grown quite close. Greek tourism in Turkey has boomed in the past decade. The Greek government now commonly renovates Ottoman mosques, while the Turkish government renovates historic Orthodox churches. It is no longer unusual to find Greek students studying in Turkish universities. Others, including Greek faculty members, have been known to search for career employment in a booming Istanbul since the recent Greek crash (Kırbakı, 2011). Times are good when it comes to Greece, at least from the Turkish perspective. The main stumbling block for Greek-Turkish relations remains, as it has since the 1960s, Cyprus. A major change in the last decade, however, is that both “mother countries” appear ready to solve the impasse, but one Cypriot community or another at any given time seems determined to reject whichever solution is floated by the UN, EU, OSCE, or other external actors.

The remaining EU countries have numerous bilateral concerns, issues, and initiatives vis-à-vis Turkey, and each one needs to be addressed separately. Kurdish issues tend to dominate discussions with Scandinavian countries, while migration, trade, and security issues concern the Balkan countries. There is no easy way to characterize the bilateral relations with so many different foreign ministries. From Hasan Durust's perspective, however, the regulatory EU bureaucracy which he has run across on dozens of occasions while driving within the Schengen area is far and away his primary concern. He is weary of over-enthusiastic inspections at the Bulgarian border, spot inspections within the zone, and the difficulty of applying for a standard tourist visa to visit his cousins in Germany. To improve Hasan's experience with the EU, Turkey should concentrate on engaging with individual member states while striving to improve its bargaining position vis-à-vis the bloc as a whole. While this bargaining position has already begun to improve in the recent past due to Turkey's stellar economic performance and booming external trade, such performance indicators

alone will be insufficient on their own to change this dynamic. To make that happen, a more fundamental change may prove necessary.

Russia and Central Asia

Although Turkey and Russia also share a stormy historical legacy over the centuries, their current relationship is nearly as strong as that between Turkey and Greece. Major interests for Turkey in this realm include rival oil and natural gas supply sources and export routes, corporate investments in Central Asia, Russian tourism in Turkey, and agricultural exports to Russia. By now far removed from both the Cold War and stormy relations following the breakup of the Soviet Union, Turkey and Russia appear to agree on certain areas of joint concern such as Iranian trade accessibility, the parameters of regional economic competition, the importance of bilateral trade relations, and the push for stability in the Caucasus. Together, they have achieved mutually reinforcing spheres of interests which avoid confrontation beyond economic competition, and may be ready for greater cooperation beyond their regions of core interest.

Turkey has little direct connection to Central Asia, beyond a somewhat stretched ethnic, linguistic, and historic set of ties. While such ties are real, their relevance in today's world is often unclear. Largely for that reason, pan-Turkism could never really succeed as a collective motivation in the region, with or without Turkey in the lead. Not only was the attempt made in the chaos following the Bolshevik Revolution easily crushed by the Red Army, medieval and early modern empires never argued pan-Turkism as their motivation for obedience and adherence. Since Turkey is not geographically close to the region, and since the ethnic ties are slim, Turkey should maintain a friendly connection from a distance, unless this situation somehow changes in the future.

Hasan has little direct connection to Russia, because he has yet to drive closer than Georgia in the Caucasus, or Romania in the Balkans. However, his cousin Ismail Durust, a family farmer with vineyards outside Manisa, observed that he and his neighbors export some 60-70% of their grapes to Russia, and that the market would collapse overnight if Russia turned away. Elsewhere, he stated that Russia's purchases of Turkey's eggplants, cucumbers, tomatoes, oranges, apples, and peppers are without rival, and

that the reason Russian agricultural importation is so important for Turkish farmers is their open market and relative lack of regulatory rigor compared to the EU. While Russia’s lax regulations concerning fertilizers and pesticides help Turkish farmers today, perhaps Turkey’s Ministry of Agriculture should consider ways to help Turkish farming methods reach EU standards – although this is another matter for another day.

Caucasus

Turkey already plays a major role in Georgia, providing a geographic conduit to NATO security assistance, corporate contractor for the new Tbilisi airport terminal, pipeline outlet, and primary trade partner. With Turkish truckers and truck stops all over the country, and closed borders with North and South Ossetia, Ingushetia, and Chechnya, Georgia at times resembles a geographic and economic extension of Turkey. While such a relationship may be a bit imbalanced for Georgia, it is a positive sign for Hasan’s business and Turkey’s interests.

Officials must try to sort out the intractable conflict between Armenian and Azerbaijan, as well as the unresolved bitterness between Turkey and both Armenia and the Armenian diaspora. A protocol signed between Turkey and Armenia was designed to solve precisely that, but cannot yet be implemented due to Azerbaijan’s opposition. Even though there are many legal, historical, and psychological traps to opening up a broad discussion on the historical record, reaching an amenable formula would remove a serious irritant from Turkey’s relations with not only Armenia, but also France, the United States, and the European Union. Some horrific violence was carried out as the Ottoman Empire reached its end, and the historical record is fairly clear on the broad outlines of those terrible years. It is time to remove this existentially significant irritant from that period, and move forward with a brighter future for both Turkey and the Caucasus.

Azerbaijan had in the past grown quite used to having Turkey back it in all proxy fights with Armenia, including over the Naborno-Karabakh region. The unfortunate reality here is that any outreach to Armenia automatically results in a backlash from Azerbaijan, which has its own claims on Armenia resulting from their 1990s war. Due to the value of Azerbaijan to

any regional pipeline initiatives, as well as due to its wealth and location at the crossroads of Iran and the Caucasus, a successful resolution without Azerbaijan is difficult to imagine.

There is currently no recognizable institution addressing the needs of the ever-fractious Caucasus region, and perhaps there can never be. There have been brief periods of unification in centuries past under Mongol, Ottoman, Safavid, or Russian rule, and there were short-lived attempts to unify the southern Caucasus in 1918 as the “Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic,” and the northern Caucasus in 1917-1920 as the “Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus” (Gökay, 1998). The futility of such attempts demonstrates how the very nature of the area encourages a multitude of isolated peoples and unique languages with little connection to one another. When there are connections across the mountain passes, relations are often not particularly amicable. In spite of the formidable historical and geographic factors arguing against Caucasus cooperation, if the three most important external regional powers – Turkey, Iran, and Russia – cooperate on this common goal, perhaps something useful can be achieved. Before such an initiative could even be attempted, however, Armenian-Turkish relations, Nagorno-Karabakh, Chechnya, South Ossetia, and a host of other conflict and post-conflict arenas must find resolution. As for Hasan, he has little direct knowledge about the Caucasus beyond certain trips he has made to Georgia.

Iran

Turkey is now Iran’s largest trading partner, surpassing the United Arab Emirates last year. While this cannot please the U.S., Turkey is maintaining the letter of the law of UN Security Council sanctions against Iran. Turkey has, however, opted out of stricter sanctions imposed separately by the United States and some EU powers, which carry no legal force for non-participating countries under international law. Considering that the U.S. encouraged Turkey and Brazil to mediate an agreement with Iran, and then refused to endorse the deal when it did not match precisely the terms expected by the U.S., there has been a break between the parties on this point. While commentators in the U.S. fault Turkey for breaking with American desires in this aspect, the operative expression for this disagreement would

be “fool me once, shame on you – fool me twice, shame on me.” Throughout the 1990s Turkey supported the American led, Security Council approved, and exceedingly harsh sanctions against Iraq, as well as the coalition attack on Iraq in 1991. Although the United States did compensate Turkey for this support, on the whole the societal damage from sanctions far outweighed the compensation, contributing to the economic inactivity, instability, violence, and population displacement which negatively transformed Southeastern Anatolia in the course of the decade. After that experience, there is little support within Turkey for again sacrificing internal stability in support of American foreign policy goals vis-à-vis Iran. As for Hasan, he has made several recent trips there, likes his counterparts, and only hopes to expand his business contacts further in the years to come.

Arab World

These are heady times in the Arab world, unprecedented since at least the 1950s. Drawing a parallel with the momentous historical turn Ibn Khaldun felt while interviewing the conqueror Timur-i Lenk outside of Damascus in 1402, Rashid Khalidi points out that “[t]his new moment in the Middle East will make the old business as usual approach much harder in Washington, in Tel Aviv, and in the Arab capitals” (Khalidi, 2011). At this point, Tunisia is contesting a new political order following the resignation of President Ben Ali; Egypt is in the midst of a lengthy and contested constitutional reform process following the resignation of President Mubarak; Bahrain has suffered a violent crackdown on anti-government protesters which has taken a sectarian turn; President Saleh of Yemen has tentatively agreed to a negotiated transfer of power in the midst of increasingly violent demonstrations; Syrian demonstrations have resulted in the deaths of thousands and threatens to devolve further; and Libya has just ended a vicious civil war which touched off NATO intervention and ended with the lynching of President Qaddafi.

It is not at all clear how the region will look when the current political transformations play themselves out, but it is highly likely that the security architecture for the region will undergo significant changes. The old system of authoritarian military strongmen operating with the support of American diplomatic and military assistance for the protection of Israeli, American,

and European interests will likely need to be renegotiated with each new government coming out of this region-wide civil unrest. Such changes might prove highly beneficial for Turkish national interests, if managed effectively and supported by a modicum of good fortune. While such popularity tends to be ephemeral, for the moment at least Recep Tayyip Erdoğan may be the most popular leader in the Arab world.

Turkey's involvement in the region has progressed a long way quickly, evolving from largely malign neglect to fully active engagement in a few short years. While the initial push was largely economic, political and diplomatic backing has not been far behind. In the past decade, trade volume has quadrupled between Turkey and the Arab world, jumping from \$7 billion in 2002 to \$28.8 billion by the end of 2009. One-fourth of Turkey's exports now go to Arab countries (Öztürk, 2011). Likewise, Arab tourism and investment is booming in Turkey, evidenced by the occasionally uncomfortable takeover of Istanbul's Talimhane and Sarıyer neighborhoods by Arab families during the summer months.

Turkish involvement is most evident in Kurdish northern Iraq, where once Turkey maintained an exclusively hostile posture springing from old Ottoman claims to the Mosul *vilayet*. The powerful neighbor to the north now serves as a supporting partner for a Kurdish Regional Government which may serve as a model for decentralized provincial rule throughout the region. As with Georgia, Turkey is by far the KRG's largest trading partner (Shadid, 2011). Turkish investment is evident throughout the region, with consumer products, telecommunications systems, schools, construction projects, and other proofs of Turkish economic success in evidence throughout (Karda, 2011).

Elsewhere, Turkey's active participation has been in evidence throughout. Trusted as an independent and neutral actor by many parties, Turkey has served as a mediator between Syria and Israel, Hamas and Fatah, the former Libyan government and the *New York Times*, and other parties. In March the United States asked Turkey to act as its "protective power" in Libya, which was indicative of Turkey's status as an impartial mediator in the region (Quinn, 2011). In terms of media outreach and cultural understanding, the situation has improved markedly in just the past year, with TRT launching its *al-Turkiya*

Arabic broadcast channel in April 2010, and *al-Jazeera* considering opening its own Turkish channel a month later (Erişik, 2010). When considered along with open borders and visa-free travel to several Arab states, Turkey appears determined to play a constructive role in the region’s societies and economies.

Although the issue barely registers on the Turkish radar, a key issue for at least two Arab countries remains their own water security. Syria and Iraq, both of which rely almost entirely on river water supplies originating in Anatolia, have watched their share of this most precious commodity decline over the past generation after Turkey completed a series of dam projects under the Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi (GAP) initiative. Although these projects are perfectly legal in the absence of an internationally recognized treaty on water sharing, they are slowly strangling Mesopotamian agriculture as water that used to flow into Iraqi date palm groves now evaporates into the atmosphere over southeastern Anatolia. Considering that in Anatolia these dams waste water, cause a great deal of population displacement, and threaten to submerge the historic city of Hasankeyf, one of the easiest and earliest gifts Turkey could present to these two neighboring Arab countries would be to announce the project’s early completion. Tentative moves toward a “friendship dam” with Syria might also be a positive sign, even though such initiatives necessarily await a resolution of Syria’s domestic struggles.

Hasan Durust noticed the overall improvements in relations with the Arab World, as it had made travel through the region far easier than it was in the bad old days of the 1990s – until widespread unrest broke out in the past few months. Until recently, he was routinely transporting goods throughout Northern Iraq and Syria, and had even travelled as far south as Egypt (via the Aqaba-Sinai ferry). He has developed loose friendships with Arab and Kurdish counterparts throughout the region, and would hope to see such ties continue to develop for his and his new friends’ mutual benefits.

East Asia

China is the emerging superpower of the world, and may have already reached that point financially. In many ways China is a hard edged economic competitor, one which has already done a lot of damage to the Turkish textile industry, to offer but one example. As Turkey emerges on the in-

ternational stage as a regional power, this competition should only grow more robust. Chinese and Turkish economic interests compete quite frequently in Central Asia and Africa, especially in terms of consumer product exports and construction contracts. As long as such competition remains economic, there is no reason to panic, especially considering how distant China is in almost every way. In addition, as both China and Turkey grow wealthier, there is every reason to be optimistic about increased trade ties and cooperation in other spheres.

Japan and Turkey share a distant affinity that dates back at least to the 1889 rescue and return of 69 Ottoman survivors from their shipwrecked battleship, the *Ertuğrul* – a favor returned in 1985 when Turkish Airlines airlifted some 200 Japanese nationals out of Tehran in the midst of Iraqi missile strike threats (Charity, 2010). As the two powers are quite remote, it is easy to maintain a distant friendship, which is equally grounded in similar psychological approaches to “the West” and a correlation of cooperative interests throughout Turkey’s home region. While relations are solid, further cooperation on Tigris-Euphrates water sharing negotiations, Afghanistan conflict resolution initiatives, or trade cooperation might advance interests on both sides. Turkish nationals enjoy visa-free travel to Japan and vice-versa, but while Hasan Durust has heard nice things about the Japanese, he is unlikely to have sufficient wealth or reason to visit Japan any time soon.

Latin America

Brazil is emerging as a powerful and valued partner with Turkey in world affairs, as evidenced by their joint deal to bring an end to the Iranian impasse. Outside of Brazil, there is not a great deal specific to say about Turkish relations outside of a continuing interest in mutually beneficial trade. That said, unbeknownst to Europe and the U.S., Latin American and Middle Eastern societies share a distant affinity based on little more than broadly similar post-colonial and developmental experiences in the past century.

Africa

Although Prime Minister Erdoğan announced that 2005 would be the “year of Africa,” not much beyond economic growth can be said about Turkish-

African relations, especially once North Africa is removed from the equation. Turkish involvement with Africa exists at a level similar to that of Central Asia, dominated by consumer product exports and construction contracts. However, since sub-Saharan Africa is so poor, the collective impact of such economic relations is not yet noticeable on a global plane of comparison. Although still quite modest in the grand scheme of things, Africa’s share of Turkish total exports doubled from 4.7% in 2002 to 8.2% in 2010 (Öztürk, 2011).

Turkey’s Role in its Region

Taking stock of such a disparate, multi-faceted, and unstable world, what is a foreign policy strategist to do? One way to conceive of Turkey is to think of Anatolia (and Thrace) as sitting in the center of a series of interconnected Venn diagrams, or webs. Like Charlotte the benevolent spider spinning webs that warn the other barn animals of pending trouble (White, 1952), Turkish officials should work to strengthen bonds in all directions, continuing to operate to the extent possible under the vision of “zero problems,” searching for opportunities to foster mutual advantage with all sovereign states, and working to overcome the ghosts of the past. Such a strategy relies on Turkish officials striving to build and strengthen regional systems which fit the geographic and historical logic of the region in question. Considering the regional constructions reviewed here, the guiding principles should be that the sum is stronger than its parts, organic growth is better than sudden expansion, and future stability and prosperity should be based on policy ingredients already present.

European Union

When it comes to the EU, no major changes are in order. Turkey has aspired to join this union almost since its launch, initially applying for associate membership in the European Economic Community in 1959. Turkey need change little on its side, as it has already made a great deal of progress in the past decade adjusting its political system and regulatory systems to meet EU norms. As many of these changes have acquired their own domestic momentum, Turkey can continue on its current path in that regard – as

long as domestic consensus matches EU requirements, and as long as the EU continues to remain a going concern. When these two poles cease to coincide, the country will be faced with a stark choice. At this point, the choice appears clear – since the EU shows little enthusiasm for admitting Turkey in the near to medium term, and since remaining enthusiasm in Turkey slides a little further every year, the country should prioritize domestic needs over EU requirements when the two conflict. Should EU officials or politicians complain about such absence of adherence, Turkish officials should respond with suggested benchmarks on accession in exchange for further regulatory modifications. They should particularly follow this approach when EU regulatory requirements directly damage Turkish economic sectors, local populations, or cultural traditions. Examples abound of seemingly malicious diktats from Brussels destroying regional cottage industries or culinary traditions in the name of efficiency, health, or regulatory standardization. As much as Turkish leaders may burn with desire to join this exclusive club, they should fight for their people's right to consume sheep guts, raw ground meat, and goat parts.

OSCE

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is a useful organization for cooperating on security, democratization, and human rights issues throughout both Europe and the CIS countries (former USSR). The organization was originally quite limited in scope when founded in 1973, providing little more than a neutral space for discussion during the last years of the Cold War. In the 1990s, however, the OSCE began to engage in real field activities, starting with election monitoring and progressing beyond to border monitoring, police training, democratization, human rights, and other issues connected to security. While conflicts between Russia and the EU at times limit the effectiveness of the OSCE, and it is so large geographically as to prove difficult to maintain a strong sense of common purpose, the organization is also a potentially useful tool for providing peace and stability throughout the area which it covers. For that reason, as representatives of a founding member state, Turkish officials should encourage and support its further institutional development and capacity expansion.

Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

The BSEC was founded in 1992 under active Turkish leadership, and proved only feasible as a vibrant regional cooperation council following the full dissolution of the Soviet Union. All states bordering the Black Sea littoral are members, as well as several nearby states without a Black Sea coastline. The organization has so far concentrated on modest activities such as environmental research and capital funding support. Far more can be done with this organization, although it is somewhat limited by its relatively brief institutional history, constricted geographic spread, and thus far limited mandate. As with other collective initiatives throughout the regions where Turkey is engaged, its institutional development and pact elaboration should be encouraged.

The Central Cooperative Union

As Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu recently put it, “it is time to naturalise the flow of history” (Davutoğlu, 2011). Referring primarily to the Arab world, Minister Davutoğlu laid out a rough sketch for regional cooperation with Turkey’s neighbors to the south, consistent with the principles of mutual respect and dignity, the imperative of change and transformation, peaceful interaction, transparency and accountability, and universal respect for territorial integrity. While the minister’s plan appeals for improved relations with the Arab world, a proposal placing Turkey at its logical center needs to look beyond the neighbors lying to the south. Any initiative advocated by Turkey cannot be as geographically or psychologically straightforward as the “European Union,” which has decades of “Western Civilization” university courses and centuries of Church oversight inculcating otherwise diverse populations with a common purpose. Rather, holding to the maxim that savvy competitors must “play with the cards they are dealt,” Turkey should strive to bind together a new entity which contradicts none of the previously existent institutions, but aims for more than has yet been attempted in the area.

While there exist several potential names for a regional cooperative framework for the neighborhood in which Turkey rests, most are either dif-

ficult to use or as illogical as a defense alliance nominally based in the North Atlantic maintaining a decade long occupation in Central Asia. A “Middle East Union,” while quite useful as a shorthand expression, is highly problematic, as there is no such consensus entity called the “Middle East.” The Middle East as a geographic moniker only dates back to the turn of the 20th century, and makes no sense except from the peculiar viewpoint of the major world power at that time (Koppes, 1976). Obviously, the “Middle East” can only be such for those situated in the European extension of the Eurasian continent. Only a British imperialist viewing the world from London could see the various amalgamation of regions including North Africa, West Asia, Anatolia, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Iran as being a “Middle East,” meaning an area situated between the older and equally ambiguous term “Near East” and the “Far East,” crucial as a way station on the way to the empire’s crown jewel, India. Alternatives that have been tried in earlier ages included the “Near East” and the “Orient,” neither of which is any more appropriate in terms of accuracy, objectivity, specificity, or perspective.

If one looks to the region’s internal nomenclature, other problems arise. While one could refer to the region in question as “Dar al-Islam,” this would prove absolutely unacceptable to the non-Muslim, secularist, or nationalist members of any envisioned union. It would also provoke commentary from followers of Samuel Huntington in search of civilizational conflict between an overly essentialized Islam and Christianity (Huntington, 1993). To avoid such existential conflicts, the question of collective religious identity should be entirely sidelined within any cooperative framework launched in such a sensitive and cosmopolitan region burdened by memories of a violent and sectarian past.

Another previous internal option which might be considered is the classic “Memalik-i Mahruse-i Al-i Osman,” or “Protected Domains of the Ottoman Dynasty.” Unfortunately, that term, while offering the sort of valuable geographic flexibility that comes easily to dynastic empires, would alienate many post-nationalist populations who might be interested in joining an entity not explicitly connected to the dear, departed Ottoman *padişahs*. While the Ottoman collective memory is a positive one for many in the post-Ottoman

space, particularly in Turkey, it is clearly not for all. Ottoman cheerleaders tend to highlight the positives of a highly tolerant, cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious imperial space throughout much of its history. Ottoman detractors, however, tend to emphasize the chaotic, violent, sectarian, and nationalistically framed demise of the longstanding power. Even for those who might be quite comfortable with a neo-Ottoman vision, practical problems arise. First of all, considering that such a constitutional monarchy might desire, or at least not be able to resist the desire for, a monarch to embody the symbolic protocol emblematic of legal sovereignty, where would such a *padıŝah* be found? While importing a second rank German duke might suffice for most nationalistic monarchies, it is not likely to impress any potential members of such an envisioned entity. Secondly, adopting a neo-Ottoman framework would logically limit the geographic space involved in the proposed entity to regions which were once part of the “Protected Domains.” Finally, considering that the Ottoman imperial identity was solidly wrapped up in Sunni Islam since the 16th century, an objection similar to that raised with the “Dar al-Islam” possibility returns to the fore.

So, what should this entity be called? First, the region must be defined. Marshall Hodgson referred to it variously as the “Central Oikumene,” “Central Islamic Lands,” or “the Nile to Oxus Region,” depending on context (Hodgson, 1974). While Hodgson’s terms are more accurate, all three of these are problematic for their own reasons. The “Central Oikumene” is impossibly obtuse for practical politics, and by the time relevant populations, and the world in general, would be educated in the logic of the term, the union would have ceased to exist either from old age or collective laughter. The “Central Islamic Lands” brings back the spectre of religion, and the “Nile to Oxus Region” unnecessarily limits the geographic limits of the union. Other regional definitions, such as “West Asia and North Africa,” “Eastern Mediterranean,” or “Black Sea,” all suffer from the same problem of geographic limitation.

The initiative proposed here includes all of the ideas outlined above, while embracing none. To preserve geographic flexibility, one might refer to the entity as simply a “Central Union” of some sort. This option boasts the beauty of terminological simplicity, geographic ambiguity, and institu-

tional self-confidence all at the same time. So, after reviewing several unsavory options, this humble servant proposes the generic, understated, ambiguous, and dry “Central Cooperative Union” (CCU).

Defining Regional Cooperation

Consistent with John Maynard Keynes’ observation that “in the long run, we are all dead,” there is no such thing as a permanent solution in international affairs. That, however, is no reason to give up on multi-lateral initiatives intended to preserve stability and foster collective prosperity. Initiatives which preserved peace for several generations include the 1815 Congress of Vienna, or the 1950s European Coal and Steel Community agreement – which has since evolved into the European Union. Successful initiatives such as this last should serve as the model for our proposed CCU. An unfortunate truism in international affairs is that ambitious multi-lateral initiatives, successful or not, tend to follow in the wake of massive violence and population displacement. In this case, one hopes that a vicious war leading to a long peace can be avoided through the preventive diplomacy described here.

This proposed Central Cooperative Union should not be a “union” in the exact same sense as today’s European Union. Rather, it should combine the defensive aspects of NATO’s alliance, some of the governance models pioneered by the EU, the human rights guarantees already inherent in the creation of the International Criminal Court, the freedom of movement inherent in the Schengen Agreement, and the best democratic aspects of the European Parliament. Put briefly, the Central Cooperative Union would constitute no more a “union” than the EU currently does – and should actually strive for less, in the interests of practicality and consensus.

In all of these spheres, one of the key goals should be less governmental interference, not more. Due to the region’s 20th century legacy of strong statism, this aspect might prove rather challenging. Unlike in much of Europe and the United States in recent years, the goal need not be a neo-liberal stripping away of the entire state in the name of some amorphous and completely unfunded “big society” or other Ayn Rand fantasy world. Rather, in this case, there should be a concentration on streamlining, increased efficiency, and more responsiveness from government.

The Central Cooperative Union proposed here would operate under the following guiding principles, some of which are explained further below:

- A.** Any state can join the CCU in principal, as long as they possess a border with a member state – with waivers on this requirement available following CCU consensus. Admission must be approved by $\frac{3}{4}$ of members at the time of application.
- B.** CCU members pledge not to attack other CCU members, and not to initiate hostilities with any non-CCU member.
- C.** The CCU is a nuclear weapons free zone.
- D.** State sovereignty remains paramount within all CCU institutional structures, except when explicitly stated otherwise by member states.
- E.** Regional governance within state structures is encouraged within a CCU parliamentary structure. The goal is governmental decentralization within the confines of a regional cooperative framework.
- F.** CCU citizens are guaranteed visa-free travel within the CCU and the right to own property throughout the CCU.
- G.** CCU state applicants must meet certain democratic and human rights benchmarks to be eligible for accession. The primary requirement is that each individual under the sovereign control of the applicant state be guaranteed full and equal citizenship of, and legal rights within, that member state.
- H.** CCU membership can be held concurrently with other institutions of regional cooperation, as long as the goals of the other entity do not conflict with those of the CCU.
- I.** CCU citizens are guaranteed complete freedom of religious practice, and no member state shall directly sponsor or support any religion over any other.
- J.** To preserve respect for human rights well into the future, a CCU court with relevance to human rights and trade legislation shall be empowered to adjudicate these fields of legislation.

Security for All, Domination for None

It goes without saying that one of the first considerations for any model of regional cooperation must be the security architecture. In this case, the pro-

posed solution is one that should provide security for all members without threatening the security of neighboring non-members or global stability. The primary principal shall be modeled on NATO's Article Five, which states that an attack on any member will be considered an attack on all members, and shall be responded to accordingly. Subsidiary articles should pledge that: no member state will attack any other member state; member states can remain members of other alliances not in conflict with the CCU; the alliance will not attack any non-member without first being attacked; and nuclear weapons will be held by no member state. The goal of the CCU's security architecture is to counter expensive, inefficient, and dangerous militarization by operating under the "bundle of sticks" model of defense, whereby a bundle of sticks is stronger than any individual stick. Under this model, leaders of non-CCU powers would be obliged to consider the reaction of the entire CCU to any proposed military intervention. Such an alliance should not only elevate the protection of CCU citizens to the level of that enjoyed in the EU and U.S., but should also better protect the stability and security of non-CCU countries better than the current model of active and ad-hoc external intervention.

Such articles would render the Central Cooperative Union a truly defensive alliance. Unlike NATO, the CCU should adopt a highly restrictive interpretation of the common defense clause, by stating that barring an 80% vote in favor, no action taken under this clause would be conducted outside of the physical territory of CCU member states. Such an interpretation would prevent the Central Cooperative Union from threatening neighboring non-member states, and should preclude any future attempts to harness CCU military forces for initiatives outside the region. Learning from the mistakes of NATO, the Cooperative Union should ensure that no joint CCU force would ever be stationed in such distant regions as Western Europe, the Americas, or East Asia. Although some might argue that such a limitation precludes the effectiveness of a defense alliance, it should be pointed out that this limitation would only affect the CCU as a whole, not actions taken by any ad-hoc grouping of member nations.

The prohibition on internal hostility may prove hard to enforce in practice, but no more so than NATO's conundrum faced when Greece and Tur-

key came to blows and nearly fell into full hostilities at several points in the alliance’s history. Hopefully, if the union is prospering sufficiently, no internal member should feel the need to risk the peace.

The allowance for members to remain members on non-conflicting alliances is aimed primarily towards Turkey’s own NATO membership. This membership should continue, in order to reassure NATO of the defensive nature of the CCU. NATO members who protest that no member should be allowed to join an external alliance would have to justify the membership of certain alliance members in the Western European Union and other parallel security alliances. Assuming this membership does continue, Turkey’s dual role in both security alliances would only enhance Turkey’s key role as an intermediary between these neighboring regions that have not always maintained peaceful relations across their respective geographic or cultural divides.

The final two subsidiary articles are meant to reassure non-members about the peaceful intent of the Central Cooperative Union. Pledging not to attack any non-member without first being attacked, and pledging to carry no nuclear weapons, should reassure neighboring states not only that the CCU is not interested in aggression, but that the CCU even refuses to retain the means to carry out a catastrophic attack.

From Schengen to Shamgen

One of the chief goals of the CCU initiative would be to ensure freedom of internal travel without exception to citizens of all member states. This policy goal has already been actively pursued by current Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, and should be continued for reasons of mutual prosperity throughout the envisioned space. This trend has already started in certain locales, such as between Turkey and Syria. A recent initiative, dubbed “Shamgen” in the Iranian press, is a further example of such movements within the region. According to Shamgen, tourists would be able to apply for a visa to Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran at the same time (Nasseri, 2011). While regional disorder has frozen the process for now, and the administrative details have never been clarified, the idea is sound. Basically, it argues that any tourist whose home country has amiable rela-

tions with all four Shamgen countries is welcome in each. This initiative is not likely to result in a wave of new tourism, since Iraq is still not perceived as stable, Iran is not frequently marketed as a tourist destination, Syria is in the midst of a vicious civil war, and Turkey alone is prepared for large scale tourism in any case. That said, it is a good idea, and might very well feed East Asian and Latin American tourism into the initiative in the years to come. It is a model that should be nurtured, and tried elsewhere.

One of the most frustrating experiences faced by Şoför Hasan is crossing borders. While not all that much can be done to change the EU's Schengen protocols for non-members, much can be done to ensure freedom of travel within the proposed Central Cooperative Union. In the long term, such a goal might affect the difficulty of entering the Schengen countries under the current arrangement. By strengthening freedom to travel within the CCU, with the growth of prosperity in the long term, the bargaining position of CCU countries vis-à-vis the Schengen countries should improve. The CCU bargaining position vis-à-vis Schengen countries might especially improve if future CCU "Shamgen" countries as a unit were to restrict travel to citizens of non-member states, as do Schengen countries currently. Such a policy decision would inherently reduce the footprint of external tourism in CCU societies. While today millions of (potential) CCU nationals live off external tourism, particularly in Egypt and Turkey, this is not the case for all potential member states, and it is not universally supported even in those countries with high tourism. Tourism comes with several negative externalities, social, cultural, environmental, and even political. Reducing its role in the economy might prove a popular policy choice, at least in the medium to long term.

Language Politics

What language should be used for official agreements, documents, discussions, and other activities? Solid arguments can be made for several languages. Again, the EU experience is instructive. Since official documents must be made in every recognized EU language, there has blossomed a truly spectacular translation bureaucracy in Brussels. While in many ways this is unavoidable in such a multi-national undertaking, there may be ways to reduce the confusion, inefficiency, waste, and bureaucracy in a projected CCU.

Of the national languages included in the Central Cooperative Union, the most logical choice for a single official language might be Arabic. It is the language spoken by the largest numbers, with well over 300 million speakers at this point. At the same time, it holds an equivalent status for several regional languages that Latin holds for European languages, in that it has offered loan words, grammatical constructions, and a multitude of expressions to these languages. While this is also true in reverse, the influential vocabulary traffic from Arabic to other languages is far greater than the reverse. This is largely due to the effect on linguistic history of the Qu’ran, the sacred text of the majority of citizens within the region. The Qur’an has stabilized Arabic through the centuries, and has also promoted the use of Arabic in non-Arabic speaking Muslim societies. While this speaks for the strength of Arabic as a regional, even global, language, it does not make it politically palatable for many non-Arabic speakers throughout the region. If nothing else, the use of Arabic as an official language privileges the native speakers of that language in a way that is not equitable in today’s world – even though it was seen as perfectly logical more than 200 years ago. In addition, there are some who would find the use of Arabic highly objectionable for reasons of political history. In order to be inclusive, it is therefore not the best choice. While one might not rule out Arabic forever, it cannot be seen as an equitable choice today.

Another possibility might be to experiment with a regional equivalent to Esperanto, the experimental European language designed by linguists in the mid-20th century and based largely on a modernized and simplified version of Latin. Although not well known, there was an attempt to create just such a language in the late 16th century. An Ottoman Sufi named Muhyī-yi Gülşeni (d. ca. 1605) combined Arabic, Turkish, and Persian into a single language and completed a grammar named *Kitab-i Baleybelen* in order to explain its rules to his befuddled readers. Not surprisingly, the language went nowhere, and the existence of the attempt is not widely known even amongst Ottomanists. While in many ways this is an attractive option, it suffers from several handicaps. Most importantly, nobody knows the language. As a result, the expense involved in forcing the language on society through education, mandated usage, and translation services renders this option unattractive in the end. While the long term possibility of merging these three significant

regional languages into one *über* language may seem attractive in terms of cultural engineering, it would create as many problems as it solves, since such cultural engineering never passes off without negative consequences. In this case, for example, it would do damage to the literary legacies of the three languages in question, and would leave out entirely all the other languages of the region. In the end, this option is not particularly practical.

Since the largest language in the region would privilege some members over others, and since creating a new language is impractical at best, there remains the default option of using the current world language, English, for official documents. While choosing a language that is not remotely part of the region in question appears like an alienating choice at best, and since it would cut official documents off from all but the highly educated portions of the population, it still makes the most sense as a neutral language which fits best in the world economy as a whole. What this choice would mean is only that official and legal documentation would be done in English. Aside from such legal documentation, all other languages' usage would be supported by the countries using the languages in question. Unlike the EU, which maintains an army of translators in Brussels supported by the EU budget in order to ensure translation services into nearly 20 languages, the Central Cooperative Union would leave such translation to member countries.

There should be requirements that minority languages be supported by the countries where such minorities reside. Such a requirement would ensure that languages which are not the majority language in any member state would be supported. This is a highly sensitive point, and an important one. If the CCU wants universal support for its existence, it should not privilege some languages over others, or promote continuation of cultural privileging that is a relic of the nationalist past. As a minimum threshold, the requirement might be that any language used by more than 1 million people should be supported by the state or states where that language is in evidence.

Location, Location, Location

Which countries would want to belong to this CCU? The first contestants might prove to be the pioneering members of the stillborn Shamgen agreement: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. With Turkey's full backing and devot-

ed diplomatic effort, one could envision several other Arab states joining this initiative fairly rapidly, starting with Jordan and Lebanon. If Egypt were amenable to CCU membership under its new government, then several more Arab states might then be persuaded to join. In the Caucasus, if the above dual membership rules were emphasized, Georgia and Azerbaijan might be persuaded to join in time. With Iranian encouragement, Armenia might be persuaded to join once relations with both Turkey and Azerbaijan were sorted out. Early Balkan members might include several non-EU ex-Yugoslavia states, such as Kosovo and Bosnia. At that point, if the initiative proceeds apace, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Albania might be persuaded to join as well. This list of countries is contingent, rough, and easily adjusted according to circumstance – just as it should be in an initiative as geographically flexible as the CCU.

Which institutions would the CCU need, and where would they be placed? There should be a parliament, a court, and a regulatory headquarters. In order to spread the wealth and patronage, these institutions should be placed in separate large cities. The leading candidates would be the great cities of the region, such as Istanbul, Cairo, Tehran, Damascus, Baghdad, and several others. This would ultimately be a matter of negotiation between member states, but the primary principle should be spreading sovereign participation as widely as possible. While this would be inefficient, it would promote “buy in” from member societies to the project as a whole – and that buy in is more important than efficiency at this point.

Another possibility might be to follow the “Ankara model,” which would mean following Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s lead in centralizing all such CCU institutions in a single, relatively unknown, locale. This option offers the advantages of efficiency, a fresh start, and the symbolism that would come with fresh institutions. Unfortunately, it would also privilege whichever member state gained the “capital,” and it would probably create yet another mega-city in the long term.

The Democratic Imperative

While everyone pays lip service to democracy, the reality of democracy must be operative in the Central Cooperative Union. If not, then ultimate

control of the entity, as with all the member states, will remain in the hands of small plutocracies who are not answerable to their publics. Maintaining a democratic system must be a membership requirement for entry into the CCU. Although each member state, remaining fully sovereign, is in charge of designing its own democratic system, certain minimum requirements should be put in place to ensure that “democracies” avoid the failings of the following examples.

The democracies in question should not be in form only, meaning only holding elections. That recipe in the Arab world has frequently led to authoritarian dictatorships, whereby elections were held, but only one candidate or party had any chance at victory. This sort of “one man on the ballet” democracy is not worthy of the name, and should be discouraged in every way possible. The longer term results of such a system are clearly evident throughout the current wreckage of the Arab world.

Another requirement of democracy needs to be that all citizens within a member state must have scrupulously equal legal statuses, and that all individuals under the sovereign control of a member state must have full citizenship in that state, or another. Currently, the only states for which this requirement would prove problematic are Israel and certain Gulf countries. In the first case, the legal limbo caused by the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights for their populations would have to end for Israel to be eligible to join the CCU. Rather than foisting violence on Israel, as has often been the pattern in the past, the creation of a CCU would create an entity that would be so desirable to join that the Israelis might be persuaded to change their polity in order to gain entry. While many might complain that they would lose their unique characteristics as a Jewish state, the counter-argument is that they would gain access to the rest of the region, which is no small reward. In addition, the decentralized framework proposed here, modeled somewhat on Iraq’s KRG and its ambiguous relationship to the central government in Baghdad, provides an alternative roadmap out of the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock. While such a tradeoff has been suggested before, since this initiative is based neither on competing nationalisms or triumphant religious identity, just might prove more inviting to all sides than anything preceding it. If it were to succeed with both

the Israeli and Palestinian publics, the financial, psychological, and political benefits to an Israel joining a region of equals rather than attempting to control a region of subalterns is likely to be considerable.

Ideally, any democratic system would also avoid the pitfalls of American democracy, whereby choices are limited to two umbrella parties of nearly identical outlook, managed by a largely silent plutocracy. One way to avoid such an outcome would be to set up a CCU wide parliament modeled on the EU parliament, but with marginally more legislative power than the EU parliament possesses. In order to avoid a two party duopoly, there would be a low threshold for party representation, and voting structures would be modeled on the British parliament.

Whenever floated, new regional constructions face strident criticism from many different quarters, for reasons both sound and weak. While the Central Cooperative Union may appear utopian, it is no more so than past projects of nationalism, imperial expansionism, or religiously defined aggression. In every era, and every locale, there needs to be some sort of purpose, if only to avoid pointless drift. Whenever a stated objective proves obsolete – as with the constant search for process over substance which characterizes most U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East – then it becomes time to search for a new aim. The Central Cooperative Union is only dangerously utopian for those stuck in the inertia of the present, or should supporters push the agenda to a dangerous extreme. As argued here, the stated goal is nothing more than a set of aspirations for which the regions to which Turkey is connected might hope to aim through gradual and negotiated cooperation. In time, such aspirations might hope to improve the lives of tens of millions of Hasan Durusts in Turkey and the surrounding regions.

Nasihatname-i Durust: Hızla Değişen Bir Dünyadaki Türk Dış Politikası İçin “Ölçülü Tavsiyeler”

Özet: Türk dış politikası kendi ülkesinde ve çevresindeki coğrafyada yaşayan milyonlara daha güçlü, istikrarlı ve müreffeh bir gelecek getirebilecek midir? Türk diplomasisi bugüne kadar İkinci Dünya Savaşı tarafsızlığından, NATO’daki aktif katılımcılığa ve Avrupa Birliği seçeneğine kadar birçok al-

ternatifler denedi. Bu stratejik yönelimlerin her biri yapıldıkları dönemde anlam ifade etmiş ve Türkiye'nin bu kanlı ve şiddet dolu yüzyılda hangi bloğu desteklediği yönünde belirli bir idrakin oluşmasına neden olmuşlardır. Ancak yeni bir yüzyılın başlaması ve olgunlaşması Türkiye için kendisini destekleyecek ortakların da katılımıyla taze bir çerçeve hazırlaması yönünde fırsat doğurmuştur. Bu noktada Türk politika yapıcılarını her yöne doğru bağlarını daha da kuvvetlendirmeli, 'sıfır problem' hedefi doğrultusunda hareket etmeye devam etmeli, tüm bağımsız devletlerle karşılıklı avantajları artıracak fırsatlar aramalı ve geçmişin hayaletlerinin üstesinden gelmelidir. Bölgesel yapıları göz önüne alarak Türk dış politikasının prensipleri "bütün parçadan daha kuvvetlidir", "organik büyüme ani genişlemeden daha iyidir" ve "gelecekteki istikrar ve refah hali hazırdaki reçeteler üzerine inşa edilmelidir" bağlamlarında gerçekleşmelidir. Klasik politika önerisi literatürü ruhuna uygun olarak, bugünün sorunlarına karşı çeşitli seçeneklere değinerek, bu halim hizmetkar çok-katmanlı bir bölgesel politik işbirliği, ekonomik entegrasyon ve stratejik genişleme çerçevesi tavsiye etmektedir. Coğrafi esnekliği, terminolojik basitliği, coğrafi belirsizliği ve kurumsal kendine güveni korumak için, "Merkezi Birlik" gibi bir yapı önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Türk Dış Politikası, istikrar ve refah, çok katmanlı bölgesel işbirliği, Merkezi Birlik.

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