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Peace Operations and the Transformation of Turkey's Security Policy

H. TARIK OĞUZLU AND UĞUR GÜNGÖR

Peacekeeping operations are usually evaluated in terms of their effects on conflict, but their effect on participants can be just as transformative. This article analyses the motivations at the roots of Turkey's involvement in peace operations, mostly organised under the leadership of the United Nations in the post-Cold War era. Turkey's approach to peace operations has been to a significant degree informed by the ideational need to be recognised as a member of the Western international community. Participation in such operations has been an identity-constructing activity in the sense that Turkey has tried to reinforce its eroding Western identity in this particular way.

Despite this ideational motivation, alternative explanations can also be offered as to why Turkey has increasingly involved itself in peace operations. Theoretically speaking, traditional realist and neo-realist security-related considerations offer a rival account. Following this logic, the changing dynamics in Turkey's regional environment might have endangered Turkey's security, leading Turkish authorities to consider participation in peace operations as an effective strategy to deal with the emerging security challenges. Alternatively, a domestic politics-based explanation might prioritise the efforts of ethnic, secular or nationalist lobbies inside the country as the main motivating factor. From this perspective, Turkey's decisions to participate in international peace operations are influenced by the lobbying influence of Turkish people, such as those with kinship relations with Muslim people of neighbouring countries in the Balkans and Caucasus.

In contrast to such explanations, this article underlines the ideational concern for national recognition as a member of the community of Western nations as the main motivating factor of Turkish peacekeeping policy. This ideational concern has also a security dimension, but not in the neo-realist vein as described above. This security dimension concerns Turkey's aspirations to be recognised as a part of the Western international community. Turkey's most important security interest since the foundation of the Republic has been to gain Western identity. This has been thought of as the only realistic way not to experience the fate of the Ottoman Empire. Put somewhat differently, westernization has been a security strategy.¹ While this was relatively easy during the Cold War era, the credentials of Turkey's Western identity began to be seriously questioned in the 1990s. Therefore, active involvement in peace operations has been seen as a near-panacea to reinforce the country's Western identity in the West. This ideational concern became fully observable as Turkey decided in September 2006 to send approximately 1,000 troops to southern Lebanon to be deployed as part of the UN-led mission.

Having clarified the main argument, this article will first discuss the changing nature of peace operations during the post-Cold War era. The main goal of this article is to demonstrate that such operations have increasingly gained an ideational dimension, which plays a vital role in the re-construction of Turkey's Western identity through the projection of Western constitutive norms onto the conflict-laden geographies. Such transformative peace operations have also been in accordance with the changing security understanding of the West, according to which democratisation and liberalisation in the non-Western world through peace operations has been one of the most important Western security strategies. The more security has gained a human and societal character, emphasizing interdependence and transregional goals, the more peace operations have gained an ideational dimension.

Following this, the next section examines alternative motivations behind Turkey's active involvement in peace operations in the 1990s. Ideational, security-related and domestic factors are compared and contrasted in the light of Turkey's experience in various peace operations. The conclusion will simply summarise the findings of the research and discuss the possible consequences of Turkey's participation in peace operations for its Western identity, security interests, relations with the EU, military modernisation process, and so on.

This article challenges the realist narrative that has long dominated studies of Turkish security policy, offering a fresh analytical view of the changing nature of peace operations during the post-Cold War era. Second, it offers a novel understanding of the reasons why a particular country participates in peace operations. In this regard the article underlines the differences between motivations that guide behaviours of major and medium-sized countries. Third, the article also presents a largely overlooked dimension of Turkish security policy as it unfolded during the post-Cold War era. In the absence of the common Soviet threat and in the presence of the changing geopolitical priorities of the US, NATO and the EU, Turkey's participation in peace operations showed a different and transformed side of the country previously missing from foreign perceptions. As a deliberate goal, this ideational policy cannot be examined from a pure neo-realist security perspective.

The meaning that Turkey has attached to participation in peace operations differs from that understood by the EU and the US. While peace operations have become the basic justification for the existence of European armed services, they have been of relatively minor importance for the US and Russia. In contrast to these approaches, Turkey has placed great ideational importance on its participation in peace operations. They have been important for the re-construction of Turkey's Western identity as well as the maintenance of Turkey's number one security interest, being a part of the West.

Changing Nature of Peace Operations and Western Identity

Understanding Turkey's participation in peace operations during the Cold War and post-Cold War eras requires an analysis of the relationship between peace operations and the Western identity.

UN peace operations began in 1947 in Indonesia with an international observer mission. They subsequently evolved in size, complexity, legitimacy and effectiveness,

with periods of innovation, development and expansion and other periods of difficulty, failure and disillusionment. The UN undertook 13 peace operations of varying scope and duration during the Cold War, a period characterised by the dominance of the two superpowers of international politics. The attitude of those superpowers had a crucial impact on the nature of peace operations.

The main purpose of setting up peacekeeping operations was to help contain local conflicts to a limited area so that such conflicts did not escalate in such a way as to engulf major superpowers.² The principle of non-involvement in domestic affairs of states was regarded as sacred, in harmony with the prevailing security conceptualisation of the period under consideration, and this kept the number of peace operations at a minimum. External sovereignty used to be more important than internal sovereignty.

The main characteristics of peace operations during the Cold War era consisted of the following. First, force was to be used only in self-defence. Second, the force used should be proportional. Third, deployment of peace troops required the consent of the parties concerned. Fourth, major powers abstained from providing operations with troops. Fifth, troops used to carry light arms. Finally, missions were mainly authorised to oversee armistices and to separate belligerent parties from each other.³ Peace operations of the Cold War era were short of having ideational aspects. They could rather be considered as strategic initiatives undertaken with a view to helping preserve the balance of power between two rival blocs. They were missions empowered to 'manage' conflicts rather than 'resolve' them.

Unlike these, peace operations during the post-Cold war era have gradually become Western security initiatives, contributing to Western security by helping to transform conflict-laden areas in line with liberal-democratic norms.⁴ Western undertakings in Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Afghanistan testify to this understanding.

The catastrophic events in the Balkans and the Caucasus in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union urged the Western security elites to re-define security as different from the strategic security understanding of the Cold War era. The emerging consensus on security emphasised the trans-regionalised, interdependent, internal, human and societal nature of security. Today's conflicts are more likely to be intra-state rather than international conflicts, triggered by a range of factors, including social, ethnic or religious strife, the violation of human rights, poverty, inequitable distribution of resources, environmental degradation, large-scale migration, drug trafficking, organised crime and terrorism.⁵

Now, there is a close linkage between security and states' legitimacy which is deemed to emanate from states' performance in meeting the demands of their citizens. Unless states contribute to the happiness and well-being of their citizens, they would be regarded as illegitimate and possible sources of international instability and insecurity. With the decline of Westphalian sovereignty, states increasingly feel themselves responsible for what happens in other states and even find themselves held internationally accountable for events in their own domestic realm.⁶

The degree of sensitivity towards internal orders of weak/failed states has further increased in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, as the link between transnational terrorism and states' domestic order has been drawn more boldly. The

process of globalisation has inadvertently increased the vulnerability of the core states to what happens in peripheral countries. This time the US has come closer to the idea that security is in fact structural and process-oriented.⁷ It has been increasingly noticed that for the security of the core states to improve, the problem of non-governance in weak states needs to be resolved alongside the principles of liberal democracy. Peace operations, it is widely hoped, will lead to good governance in conflict-riven areas.

That is why peace operations are now multi-functional and given more challenging mandates such as the promotion of national reconciliation, organisation and the supervision of elections, protection of human rights, humanitarian tasks and most importantly nation-building.⁸ And that is why the number of peace operations undertaken in the course of the past 15 years has increased dramatically. For example, while since 1948 there have been 60 UN peace operations, the Security Council created 47 of these the years between 1988 and 2006. There are currently 15 peace operations under way involving 89,682 peacekeepers.

Just as the enlargement of the EU and NATO to Central and Eastern European countries has helped stabilise these regions and improved European security, growing peace operations in the Balkans and other geographies served similar functions.⁹

Developing NATO's crisis management capabilities on the one hand and endowing the EU with peacekeeping/peacebuilding capabilities with crisis-management and human security dimensions on the other, should be interpreted in line with this changing security understanding.¹⁰ These efforts are not only security-oriented but also cover an ideational dimension in the sense that peace operations have enabled Westerners to maintain the legitimacy of the core Western values in the volatile international system. Peace operations have proved effective tools through which the West can project its constitutive values to non-Western areas.

Turkey's Approach to Peace Operations During the Cold War

Although Turkey's involvement in UN-led peace operations has increased in the post-Cold War era, Turkey shied away from such missions during the Cold War years. This was so despite the fact that seven out of 13 peace operations were deployed in the Middle East.

Turkey first participated in the UN military operation in Korea in 1950 with a brigade. Between the years 1950 and 1953 a total of 15,000 Turks served in Korea on a rotational basis. This was the only case concerning the deployment of Turkish troops abroad as part of a peace operation.

In order to understand Turkey's reluctance in this regard, it would be useful to underline the following points. First, international systemic change from a 'balance of power' to a 'bipolar' system with the onset of the Cold War era dramatically curtailed the manoeuvring capability of small and medium-sized countries. Kirişçi argues that, it is not surprising to find that Turkish foreign policy did not seem to go 'beyond the parameters set by the politics of the Cold War'.¹¹ Therefore, it would not be an overestimation to argue that Turkey's attitude towards peacekeeping operations during the Cold War era was determined by her membership in NATO.

Membership in NATO had two particular effects on Turkey. The first was that Turkey had to streamline its peacekeeping policy with that of the alliance in general and the US in particular. Given that American and NATO were lukewarm to the idea of setting up peacekeeping operations for troubled conflicts, lest such contingencies might lead to dangerous confrontations between America and the Soviet Union, Turkey had also hesitated to develop a strong interest in such operations. Turkey did not want to provoke the Soviet Union by contributing to peace operations in the Caucasus and Central Asia, which were under the control of Moscow. Second, the security guarantee offered by NATO membership did mainly satisfy Turkey's security interests. Hence there was no need to construct a linkage between security and internal affairs of states and to develop special capabilities for peacekeeping operations.¹²

Second, Turkey focused its energy on internal development and sought to avoid foreign tensions that could divert it from that goal. Instead of projecting power and contributing to peace operations, Turkey focused strictly on protecting borders and maintaining internal border.¹³ This was in full harmony with the prevailing security understanding of the period, according to which the main threat was external, focused on the Soviet Union's goal extend its territorial influence.

Last but not least, Turkey's regional environment displayed far more stability than it has done in the post-Cold War era. Turkey was not exposed to spillover risks since these conflicts did not involve Turkic and other Muslim peoples with whom Turkey had historic ties.

Post-Cold War Developments

With the advent of the post-Cold War era Turkey's involvement in peace operations increased. Since 1988, Turkish armed forces have actively joined various peace operations with various observation functions: four UN, one OSCE, one regional peace operation with military observers and eight UN peace operations with military contingents. In summary these include the following operations:

In the Balkans, Turkey participated in the UN Protection Force in Bosnia-Herzegovina (UNPROFOR) in 1993–95, Implementation Force (IFOR) and Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1996–present), Combined Police Force in Bosnia Herzegovina (1995), UN Preventive Deployment Force in Macedonia (1995–present), International Police Task Force in Bosnia Herzegovina (1997–present), Operation 'Alba' in Albania (1997), Kosovo Verification Force (1998–99), and Kosovo Force (2001–present).

Turkish Land Forces participated in UN peacekeeping operations in Bosnia with a brigade. The navy participated in Operation 'Sharp Guard' in the Adriatic, whose mission was to monitor and impose an arms embargo on the former Yugoslavia. The air force joined NATO's Operation 'Deny Flight' in Bosnia and Operation 'Allied Force' in Kosovo with a squadron of F-16s.¹⁴

Turkey initiated the formation of a number of Balkan regional bilateral and multilateral political, economic, military and social projects such as the Black Sea

Maritime Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR) in April 2001, the South East European Co-operation Process (SEEC) in February 2000, the Multinational Peace Force South East Europe (MPFSEE) and the Southeastern European Brigade (SEEBRIG), in September 1999, and the Southeast European Co-operation Initiative in 1996.

In the Middle East, Turkey contributed to the UN Iran–Iraq Military Observer Group (1988–91), the UN Iraq–Kuwait Observation Mission (1991–2003), Operation ‘Provide Comfort’/‘Northern Watch’ after the Gulf War of 1990–91 (1991–2003), and Temporary International Presence in Hebron in Israel-Palestine (1997–present).

In the Caucasus, Turkey has contributed to the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (1993–present) with five officers since 21 October 1994 within the framework of the OSCE. Elsewhere, Turkey also participated in the UN Operation in Somalia (1992–94) and the UNMISSET (United Nations Mission in Support East Timor) with two officers and 20 policemen. Turkey had already declared that it could contribute with a battalion power force to the ‘United Nations Standby Arrangements System’, which envisaged the rapid deployment of UN peace forces in the case of a threat against world peace.

Turkish armed forces participated and led the ISAF-II (International Security Assistance Force) mission deployed for Afghanistan’s security and reconstruction between June 2002 and February 2003. Turkey once again took over the command headquarters of the NATO-led International Security Force (ISAF-VII) in Afghanistan on 13 February 2005. Turkey led ISAF-VII from February 2005 to August 2005. Of the ISAF contingent, Turkey is currently providing the largest force, with 1,700 troops deployed in the country.

Finally, Turkey is now contributing to NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) programmes, and established a PfP Training Centre in 1998 in Ankara. Having mentioned the cases involving the deployment of Turkish troops abroad, the next section will analyse different set of motivations behind this.

Regional Security-related Factors

This traditional explanation is based on the assumption that Turkey’s participation in peace operations has been a function of its security needs. When the systemic changes following the dissolution of the Soviet Union increased Turkey’s vulnerability to regional security concerns, Ankara increasingly saw involvement in peace operations, as well as developing its peace keeping capabilities, as an effective security strategy. From this point of view, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the transformation of the political and strategic landscape of Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the eruption of violent ethno-national conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus affected Turkey negatively.¹⁵ Turkey found itself at the very centre of the areas in crisis, where ultra-nationalist, aggressive and irredentist tendencies were vibrant. Unlike the Cold War era, Turkey geopolitically has become a unique country bordering several regions very different from each other.¹⁶

In parallel to such tectonic changes in Turkey’s neighbourhood, not only have traditional threats to Turkey’s security increased but also Turkey has become increasingly exposed to the side effects of intra-state conflicts in all of these regions. Not only

have hard-security concerns remained relevant but also soft-security issues have increasingly occupied Turkey's security agenda. Ethnic nationalism, religious fundamentalism, ethnic or religious terrorism, social and economic instabilities, illicit trafficking of arms and drugs, refugees and illegal migration have become issues of concern. The proliferation of WMD, south of Turkey, has turned out to be another vital security concern.¹⁷ Besides, the emergence of a power vacuum in northern Iraq following the first Gulf War increased Turkey's exposure to terrorist attacks by the PKK (Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan or Kurdistan Workers' Party).

It is in such a context that the Balkans became the first area where Turkey played an influential peacekeeping diplomacy role. Following the fragmentation of Yugoslavia regional stability was seriously undermined. Violent ethno-nationalist conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo increased the possibility that a major conflict could spill over into Turkey. To prevent the escalation of conflicts in the Balkans, Turkey embarked on an activist diplomacy.¹⁸ Turkey advocated strong measures against Serbia and Serbian militias. The Turkish government had been very active in raising the issue in a variety of forums ranging from the Islamic Conference Organization to the Conference on Security and Cooperation. At these forums the Turkish government expressed its readiness to contribute troops to any peacekeeping force that would be established. This was the first time that Turkey declared its willingness to join an international force since 1950.¹⁹

From this perspective, Turkey's participation in peace operations in the Balkans and the Caucasus can also be seen as a strategic action aimed at helping bolster Turkey's regional standings vis-à-vis other regional actors, namely Greece in the Balkans and Russia in the Caucasus. The rise of the new Turkic republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus and the eruption of ethnic and secessionist conflicts in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Chechnya not only endangered regional security but also provided Turkey with another important opportunity to expand its regional influence through an activist foreign policy.²⁰

Therefore, in response to Turkey's growing exposure to a constellation of hard and soft security threats, its security policy-makers face growing demands to improve the operational capabilities of the Turkish armed forces. In parallel with the concept of forward defence, Turkish policy-makers will face growing pressure to transform the armed forces from a conscript-based conventional army into a professional army of highly mobile and technologically equipped military units.²¹

However, the critical point here is that the transformation of Turkish armed forces with a view to dealing with new types of security threats would be seen as more legitimate were this transformation process carried out as part of Turkey's efforts to join peacekeeping operations organised under the leadership of the Western international community. This is an instrumentalist approach to peacekeeping. The goal is to help legitimise Turkey's efforts to modernise its army, not to eliminate possible sources of national or regional insecurity.

Even though Turkey's security has come under serious challenges from regional developments, these cannot convincingly explain the country's participation in peace operations. Put somewhat differently, such regional security threats were not too compelling a factor for Turkey to seek its security through peace operations. Neither the

crises in the Balkans nor the Caucasus seriously threatened Turkey's vital security interests. Turkey's own conventional military capabilities would likely deter possible aggressors. How the neo-realist logic would explain Turkey's active involvement in the American-led peace operations in Somalia and Afghanistan where Turkey did not have clear security interests remains a puzzle.

Domestic Factors, Ethnic Lobbies

Another set of factors accounting for Turkey's involvement in peace operations suggests that ethnic conflicts in Turkey's region generated extensive concern in Turkey due to the presence of large numbers of Turks who had migrated from neighbouring areas, particularly the Balkans, to Turkey over the years.²² It is certain that the impact of ethnic lobbies on Ankara's decisions to send troops to international peacekeeping operations in the Balkans and the Caucasus was noteworthy. Everyday events in the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East were rapidly noted in the Turkish security debate and played a role in public opinion,²³ for they involved parties with strong cultural, ethnic or religious ties to Turkey.

However, it is difficult to prove such an impact. There has been no academic study so far. Moreover, how could one explain the presence of Turkish troops in Somalia, Afghanistan, Lebanon and distant places from this perspective? Moreover, the impact of public opinion on the foreign policy-making process has traditionally been very limited in Turkey. The local war against PKK-led separatist terrorism, furthermore, strongly influenced expectations about where the armed forces were needed most. Therefore, the Turkish people probably would have rejected the sending of Turkish troops abroad, viewing it as a distraction from their most urgent security concerns and a source of greater economic burden.

The Ideational Alternatives

Given the unconvincing nature of the explanations above, this article argues that Turkey's involvement in peace operations during the post-Cold War era can better be explained by the dynamics of Turkey's relations with the West. Turkey's contribution to Western security interests had in the past constituted the most important link tying Turkey to the West, and therefore making it easy for Turkey to be recognised as Western. Turkey's concern to be recognised as Western was met by its membership in NATO and close cooperation with the West against the common Soviet threat. Besides, Turkey's security identity and interests were in accordance with those of the Western international community. While the West itself defined its security identity/interest in opposition to the Soviet Union and prioritised the preservation of the Western style of living as the most important security goal, Turkey did not find it difficult to get socialized into this understanding.²⁴ Since peacekeeping was understood as a regulator of international tension, matters of domestic stability were not a priority for Western peacekeeping perspectives. Thus, peace operations during the Cold War era were too modestly conceived to display an identity-constructing aspect.

This situation has completely changed in the post-Cold War era. When the West started to see peacekeeping operations through a new perspective, Turkey's interest in such operations also developed. Turkey could not remain outside this revitalized

peacekeeping project, especially since the credentials of its Western identity have come under strong challenges following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

While NATO has gradually lost its European and Western character following the transformation of the Alliance from being a Western collective defence organisation into a semi military-semi political collective security organisation, the EU increasingly emphasised liberal-democratic transformation of state-society relations as the most important criterion for membership.²⁵ The strategic horizons of the EU have also fixated on the European continent. In the absence of conventional security threats to many EU members the particular geography in which Turkey finds itself has increased anxieties among Europeans as to whether it would be a good idea to offer Turkey credible prospect of membership. Rather than an asset, Turkey's political geography could become a burden on Europe.²⁶

Turkey's democratic deficit, emanating from the ongoing struggle with PKK-led ethnic separatist terrorism, further decreased the prospects of Turkey's recognition as Western/European in the course of the 1990s. The unwillingness of the EU to offer Turkey membership status in the decision-making apparatus of the emerging European Security and Defense Policy initiative has additionally put a brake on Turkey's aspirations to be considered as European.²⁷

In such a negative atmosphere participation in peace operations appears to have offered Turkey a window of opportunity to help register its diminishing Western/European identity. Appearing to contribute to Western security interests was hoped to re-establish the most important link tying Turkey to the West, that is, security. The more useful Turkey became for Western security, the more Western it would be recognised by the West.

Given that many locations to which Turkey sent peacekeeping units did not directly affect Turkey's security in the traditional neo-realist sense, participation in peacekeeping operations might have been seen as a policy instrument to help bolster Turkey's Western/European identity. The important point here is that Turkey's development of peacekeeping capabilities would not only enhance Turkey's bargaining power vis-à-vis the EU, in the sense that the EU would benefit from Turkey's military capabilities in an instrumental manner, but also suggest that Turkey is transforming its security identity into that of the EU around the principles of crisis management and human security.²⁸ Sending peacekeeping units abroad would at the same time imply that security is understood as effective governance at home.

For example, Turkey's participation in ISAF and signing on to the security logic in the post-9/11 era might have contributed to the EU's decision to start the accession talks with Turkey on 3 October 2005. Similarly, Turkey's eagerness to join the EU-led peacekeeping force in the Congo should be seen as a strategic action on the part of Ankara that this would help bolster Turkey's European identity.²⁹ Turkey does not have any strategic interest in Congo. Participation would suggest that Turkey helps the West project its constitutive values onto problem areas. Participation would also accelerate the process of Turkey's adoption of the following ideas: the strategy of forward defence, the realisation that armies are deployed not only to prevent weak/failed/rogue states from doing bad things outside their borders but to urge them to do good things inside their borders.

Participation in peace operations would help Turkey give the signal that it was a responsible member of the Western international community. The decision to help initiate the BLACKSEAFORCE and the Southeast European Brigade should be interpreted in this vein. These initiatives have nothing to do with Turkey's efforts to increase its security against regional threats. All these initiatives were undertaken with the prime motivation of helping the members understand that Turkey was a net security *producer* in the region and always a part of the solution, rather than the problem.³⁰

Participating in peace operations would also imply that Turkish armed forces were becoming professionalised. If the future military contingences consisted of such operations, there would be no need for Turkey to maintain large numbers of conscripts under its military command. Reorganization of the Turkish armed forces in a peacekeeping-friendly manner would help Turkey deal more effectively with the new-age security threats.

A similar logic can also be noticed in Turkey's relations with the US. The post-Cold War era had initially shaken the fundamentals of the Turkish-American alliance-type relationship. The absence of the common Soviet threat in the north, the growing policy differences in the Middle Eastern region – particularly over Iraq, Iran and Israeli-Palestinian issues, gradual weakening of NATO as the prime channel linking Turkey to the US, the gradual transformation of the Alliance from being a pure Western/European collective defence organisation into a global semi-political/semi-military security organisation, and bilateralisation outpacing the multi-lateral character of relations have combined to shake Turkish-American relations.³¹

The 1990s saw that alliance-type relations of the Cold War years first evolved into 'strategic partnership'-type relations and lately to 'cooperation on some issues'-type relations. This process has further continued in the post 9/11 era, despite initial expectation that Turkey's Muslim/democratic identity would elevate its status in Washington. Now Turkey appears to have come to the conclusion that the US is a global superpower having vital interests across the globe, rather than only being the leader of the Western international community. Another conclusion Ankara appears to have drawn from the latest US approach towards the global war on terror is that Washington views international law and organisations, including NATO, from an instrumental perspective.

Under such conditions, Turkish elites have increasingly considered participation in peace operations as an effective strategy to help re-establish Turkey's Western and pro-American identity. That is why Turkey led the peacekeeping force in Somalia, sent substantial number of military troops to Bosnia and Kosovo, and joined and led the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

By assuming the command of NATO forces in Afghanistan, Turkey was able to demonstrate the solidarity of the Turkish–American strategic partnership and its own resolve to combat terrorism. Turkey's participation in ISAF was also a well thought out strategic calculation on the part of Ankara to help mend fences with the Americans following the deterioration of bilateral relations in the wake of the latest Iraq War.³² ISAF experience is also revealing for another reason. It demonstrates that in the post-9/11 world Turkey has signed onto the logic that international

security and internal affairs of states are closely related to each other. It shows that Ankara accepts the post-Westphalian belief in the importance of spreading democracy, public accountability and security reform. Foreign support for Turkey's leading role in ISAF also implies Western acknowledgement that it can successfully deal with the security challenges of the post-9/11 era only in close collaboration with the Muslim world. Turkey, as a secular and Western-oriented state with an overwhelming Muslim population, contributes to the legitimacy of the Western-led international peace operations in the eyes of the Muslim communities all around the globe.

A similar ideational logic can be observed in Turkey's approach to nuclear weapons in Turkey. Despite many counter arguments, Turkey's security elites appear to be content with the continued deployment of approximately 90 nuclear warheads at the American bases at Incirlik and Murted. They see their presence as a guarantee of American commitment to Turkey's security as well as Turkey's Western identity in the eyes of Washington.³³

Lebanon's Meaning for Turkey

The decision of the Turkish Parliament in September 2006 to support the governmental decree regulating deployment of Turkish troops in Lebanon as part of the multinational peace operation after the Israel–Hezbollah war underpins the ideational factors behind Turkey's approach to peace operations.

The national interest argument appears to drop out here. Turkey does not have a vital strategic interest in sending troops to the already fragile and unstable southern Lebanon where the possibility of Hezbollah and Israeli forces exchanging bullets and rockets still remains extremely high. It is probable that Turkish troops will find themselves in the middle of skirmishes. In such a case the Turkish government would find it difficult to persuade Turkish public opinion to tolerate casualties in Lebanon, especially as Turkey's own struggle with the PKK terrorist cells continues to worsen. During the deliberations by the parliament prior to the approval of the government's decree, it became clear that both the main opposition party and the majority of the Turkish people were against the idea of sending Turkish troops abroad while Turkey itself has been enmeshed in more serious security challenges.³⁴

The impact of domestic ethnic interests on Turkey's decision has also been very limited. Turkey is not home to active pro-Israeli or pro-Arab ethnic lobbies. Besides, the majority of Turkish public opinion has embraced a sympathetic view of Hezbollah during the latest war in Lebanon. Turkish people overwhelmingly believe that the deployment of the UN-led mission in southern Lebanon will serve more Israeli than Lebanese interests. The goal of the mission has been understood as being to help demilitarise Hezbollah and protect Israel from the possibility of assaults that might originate from southern Lebanon.

The ideational factors behind Turkey's decision to send troops to Lebanon can be noticed in several respects. First, the US and the EU countries have supported the idea of sending such a force. Turkey hopes to improve its tarnished relations with the US by sending troops to Lebanon. Turkey is a secular and westernising country with a predominantly Muslim population. Turkey's presence in such a force would make

it clear that Turkey shares the security interests of the US in the region. Another consideration on the part of Ankara appears to be the hope that the US will revise its approach to the PKK and northern Iraq in line with Turkey's priorities in return for Turkey's support for the UN mission to Lebanon.

Second, the majority of troops will come from the member countries of the EU. As a candidate country, Turkey's contribution to the UN mission in Lebanon, signals support for EU foreign and security policies and readiness to help bolster EU's military capabilities. Third, the legitimacy of the force has already been secured as the United Nations Security Council authorised the mission.³⁵

Domestic Decision-making Process

The push towards the transformation of Turkish armed forces in a peacekeeping and friendly manner and the decision to send Turkish troops abroad have mainly come from the military. Before his appointment as Chief of the General Staff in 1998, then-Land Forces Commander General, Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu, argued that the military must become a 'force primarily used against external and internal threats that target Turkey's territorial integrity and the republic regime'. Kıvrıkoğlu moved beyond a mission of deterrence and strategic defence to say that the 'rapid deployment of the military in distant places is of vital importance in view of the threats we face and the risks and responsibilities that we may assume'. He outlined a modernisation programme to provide strategic mobility for joint operations to strike beyond Turkey's borders.³⁶

Kıvrıkoğlu stated that Turkey needed to develop operational capabilities for 'forward engagement' and 'forward defence' in addition to deterrence and collective security.³⁷ The *White Book 2000* of the Ministry of National Defense demonstrates the changes in the Turkish military and in Turkey's foreign policy. According to this report, Turkey's military strategy rests on four distinct points: deterrence, collective security, forward defence and military contribution to crisis management, and intervention in crises. The last two reflect a departure from previous strategies.³⁸

Conclusion and Future Implications

This article argued that Turkey's participation in peace operations, particularly during the post-Cold War era, could be to a significant degree explained by the ideational concern of being recognised as a Western country. Such an ideational concern has come to the fore as the Western aspects of Turkey's international/security identity have been exposed to serious challenges in the 1990s. While the prospects of Turkey's accession to the EU have remained low and the European character of NATO has gradually eroded, Turkey has increasingly turned to peace operations as an important instrument to help re-establish its tarnished Western identity. Turkey simply wanted to be seen as aiding the leading Western powers in their efforts to project the constitutive norms of the West onto non-Western areas through peace operations. Such a stance has also been in conformity with the changing meaning of security in the post-Cold War years.

Even though security-related factors and ethnic lobbies inside the country might have motivated Turkish decision-makers to actively take part in peace operations, their impacts proved to be limited. Turkey did not have to join such operations in order to deal with the emerging security threats in its environment. Its own military capabilities would have proved to be too much of a deterrent in this regard. Moreover, Turkey did not have clear-cut security interests in such regions as Somalia and Afghanistan. To be sure, there were security benefits. Participation in peace operations in the Balkans and the Caucasus has helped Turkey preserve regional peace and stability, reduce tensions and contain conflicts, encourage the propagation of democracy and the rule of law, prevent conflicts from spilling over into its territory, create a peaceful and stable environment around it and, finally, improve relations with the countries in these regions. But such advantages do not appear sufficient to explain Turkey's new-found activism.

Gauging the impact of ethnic lobbies and other domestic interests on Turkey's approach to peace operations has been made daunting by problems of measurement. We know that a significant portion of Turkey's population have come to Turkey from the Balkans and the Caucasus and they have still family connections with their relatives there. We also know that these people helped organise public meetings against the inhuman treatment meted out to their relatives in these areas. They wanted the Turkish government to take a more active role by urging the international community to immediately stop the bloodshed. There is little, if any, evidence to suggest, though, that decision-makers sent Turkish troops abroad due to the lobbying activities of these circles.

That said, participation in peace operations has had significant impacts on Turkey. First, wearing a blue helmet has promoted Turkey's reputation as a concerned, responsible regional power. Turkey's image as a security producer country has been enhanced, and it has alleviated foreign fears of Turkish interest in regional hegemony. Turkey's image in Washington and the European capitals has also improved through Turkey's active involvement in peace operations. Leaders on both sides of the Atlantic now see Turkey as a regional power contributing to peace and stability. Turkey has become an island of stability in the midst of regional instabilities. In this sense Turkey's concern with being recognised as Western and as a security producer country has been enhanced by participation in peace operations.³⁹

It would be difficult to prove that Turkey's transformation of its security understanding in a peacekeeping friendly manner, on the one hand, and active Turkish participation in peace operations, on the other, have increased the prospects of Turkey's accession to the Union and prompted EU leaders to officially start accession talks with Turkey. However, it would also be wrong to underestimate such an impact. Now, an increasing number of Westerners underline Turkey's contribution to Western security and try to justify their arguments by pointing to Turkey's participation in peace operations across the world.⁴⁰

Second, participation in peace operations has also contributed to modernisation of the Turkish military in line with changing security understandings during the post-Cold War era. The Turkish General Staff has now a particular branch responsible for participation in peace operations.⁴¹ The skills and experiences acquired by the Turkish peacekeepers abroad have contributed to the overall modernisation of the

Turkish army. A significant portion of the military staff has undertaken specialised training, including intensive English language courses, communications and driver training. Because of the short deployment cycles in the peace operations, experienced personnel regularly returned to their units with greater skills and experience, which they helped disseminate to their colleagues. Turkish military personnel have also gained the experience of cooperation and working closely with the armed forces of allied countries. Participation in peace operations has also strengthened the professionalisation of the Turkish military, a step that would bring Turkey closer to EU practices.

Third, Turkey has also gained the operational capability to deal with with PKK-Kongra Gelê Kurdistanê (KGK) terrorism through experiences gained abroad. This is important because the PKK-KGK offers a non-traditional security threat and coping with it requires expertise in low-intensity conflicts and Operations Other Than War. The Turkish military has gained such expertise through joining peace operations.

Fourth, Turkey's national security and defence policy has also been affected by participation in peace operations. Turkey now holds that defence starts outside territorial borders and what happen in other countries does closely impact Turkey's security interests. It is without doubt that Turkey's experiences in peace operations abroad have helped transform Turkey's security understanding in this way.

For example, Turkey is now more eager to take part in peace operations in troubled parts of the globe, particularly the Middle East. Three examples from the recent past are worthy of note in this regard. In the summer of 2003 the American government asked Turkey to send a substantial number of troops to Iraq. Even though the prime reason behind Turkey's acquiescence to the American proposal was to help improve Turkey's tarnished image in Washington after the 1 March 2003 crisis, its eagerness to comply can also be explained with reference to Turkey's changing security understanding. Internal chaos in neighbouring countries closely affects Turkey's internal peace and the best defence starts outside the territorial borders.

Turkey also positively responded to European requests that Turkish troops be deployed in the Congo as part of the EU mission there. As this piece goes to print, Turkey might participate in the proposed UN peace operation in southern Lebanon to oversee a permanent ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah forces. Even though the details of such a force are far from clear, Turkey is being strongly considered among the countries that could possibly supply troops. From a Western point of view, Turkey's participation would certainly increase the legitimacy of such a multinational force in the Muslim world. This is quite important given that the Arab communities in the Middle East do in fact view such a deployment through suspicious eyes. They consider that such a force would first and foremost serve Israel by helping create a buffer zone between Israel and Lebanon and eventually disarm Hezbollah fighters.

Irrespective of the regional political considerations behind the composition of such a force, the Lebanon example quite clearly demonstrates that participation in peace operations serves Turkey's two prime interests. While, on the one hand, it helps legitimise Turkey's security producer image as well as its Western identity,

on the other hand, it adds up to Turkey's bargaining power with the West. Turkey's cooperation in this particular area helps reinforce its indispensability for the regional and Western security interest. If not directly increasing the prospects of Turkey's eventual accession to the EU, Turkey's participation in peace operations particularly in the Middle East makes the EU think twice as to the appropriateness of keeping Turkey at arm's length forever.

Participating in peace operations has improved the international status and legitimacy of Turkey and probably has similar effects for other middle-sized countries. Turkey's participation burnished a reputation as an activist working in support of collective international goals, contributing to the nation's *soft power*, its ability to influence through perceptions and tacit leadership. None of the contingencies in which Turkish troops served as part of multinational peace operations directly concerned Turkey's security. This point is important because it shows that major powers and middle-sized powers approach peace operations somehow from different angles. The ideational concerns are much more visible in the second case.

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