CHAPTER 11
TURKISH SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE 1990s

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Introduction.

This study will use the term “security” to refer primarily to its external dimension rather than internal, and to the political-military aspect of security rather than its purely political, diplomatic, and social aspects.

It is nobody’s secret that Turkey is faced with a domestic challenge to its territorial integrity in the form of Kurdish separatism led by the Kurdish Workers’ Party (PKK) since 1984. It is also widely known that the Kurdish question has negatively penetrated several areas of Turkish foreign policy, souring Turkey’s diplomatic and military relations with many of its traditional friends and allies. Two developments in September 1998 have caused a deep sense of disillusionment in Turkey: the re-sponsorship by Washington of preparations for Kurdish autonomy in Northern Iraq, and the meeting of the so-called “Kurdish deputies” at the Italian parliament with several Italian parliamentarians on September 29.

This paper will limit the discussion of the role of the PKK for Turkish security to those cases where its manipulation of the external environment to enhance its ability to weaken the Turkish resolve to resist has been narrowing the threshold of human and material damage acceptable by Turkey. The sanctuary and direct assistance provided to the leadership of the PKK by Syria is the most glaring example of such cases. For years Turkey has maintained that the freedom enjoyed by the PKK in Syria and the Bekaa Valley
in Lebanon allows it to consolidate its power base so as to inflict increasingly greater, and therefore unacceptable, damage to Turkey. In early October 1998, Turkish and Syrian troops stood face-to-face across the border following the Turkish warning of October 1 to Damascus that it either cease to nurture the PKK or else face the consequences.

This paper will first survey the main features of the new security environment for Turkey, then follow with a discussion of the specific challenges as seen by it.

**The New Security Environment.**

Turkey has been in the forefront of those countries whose security situation has dramatically shifted in the 1990s. This shift has entailed two contradictory directions, one positive, the other negative.

On the positive side, the end of the Cold War has removed the threat of war between the United States and the former Soviet Union which, according to conventional strategic wisdom, would have escalated to the nuclear level at some point.

Turkey, situated directly on the former Soviet Union's southwestern borders and hence forming the most southeastern flank of NATO, most plausibly would have been physically drawn into such potentially cataclysmic war. The end of the Cold War appears to have greatly diminished the plausibility of such war. This has been an enormous relief for Turkey, the target of outright nuclear intimidation and attempted blackmail by Soviet leaders several times during the height of the Cold War.

However, the anticipation of near-perfect security and the concomitant peace dividend that the phasing out of the Cold War and the disintegration of the former Soviet Union heralded in the early 1990s for the world, in general, and for Transatlantic nations, in particular, has proven to be largely illusory for Turkey. Granted, the threat of general war seems to have been greatly reduced, and Russia, the
sole nuclear weapons successor state to the former Soviet Union, is much, much weakened. Yet, the regional environment around Turkey breeds both old and new types of political and military risks and threats that challenge, at times intrinsically and at others extrinsically, the core prerequisite of Turkish security. I define that core prerequisite as “the preservation of Turkey’s will and ability to maintain its domestic unity and socio-economic viability as a democratically-governed, independent political entity while at the same time keeping intact the country’s territorial integrity.”

The Crescent of Instability.

A crescent of instability encircles Turkey almost full circle: from the Balkans in the north, down to the Aegean in the west and the eastern Mediterranean in the southwest, through the northern Gulf in the south, and, finally, to the Caucasus in the northeast. No other part of the world—not even Northeast Asia—parallels this multi-regional crescent of instability in terms of its vast space, the number of inter-state and intra-state conflicts, the number of fragile cease-fires, the coercive involvement of the world’s most powerful military alliance, namely NATO, for peacemaking, etc. Turkey is the only land bridge that physically connects the three sub-regions of instability situated in two continents, Asia and Europe.

This exposure to several regions of instability might have direct and indirect bearing on Turkish interests. For example, Turkish interests would be adversely affected if some of the regional conflicts resulted in the violation of the security interests of those states in the region that are friendly towards Turkey, like Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Macedonia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Second, developments that would usher in a radical shift in the regional configuration of power through irredentist policies and/or coalition-building would threaten Turkish interests by undermining its relative standing in the region. During
the 4-year war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the idea of a possible Greater Serbia and a Greek-Serbian-Russian (Orthodox) Alliance were feared, both for their impact generally on the Balkan balance of power and specifically on what they would imply for Turkey's place in that balance. Turkey would be outnumbered and outmaneuvered.

The crescent of instability around Turkey presents it with direct challenges as well. For example, the intention of Iran, Syria and Iraq to obtain weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capability of one sort or another purportedly to counter Israeli capabilities presents a direct challenge to Turkish security. Or, the presence of Russian military bases and troops in the southern Caucasus (not only for peacekeeping in Abkhasia but also to man the military bases in Georgia and Armenia, and to stand guard at the Armenian-Turkish and Georgian-Turkish borders) certainly is not a source of security for Turkey. Such specific challenges to Turkish security will be discussed in more detail in the following pages.

Transformation of the Western Alliance.

The seriousness of the instabilities and vulnerabilities in the 1990s emanating from the regions around Turkey acquires added significance against the background of the transformation that the Western alliance has undergone since 1990, in response to the elimination of the Soviet threat and the emergence of regional conflicts such as the wars in the former Yugoslavia. Thus, NATO is no longer the NATO of the Cold War years. More specifically, the relevance of Article 5 is very much in doubt under today's circumstances. This implies that Turkey, or any other ally on the flanks, should have less confidence than it might have had during the Cold War that the principle of collective defense would be invoked in case of aggression against it. Moreover, Turkey is only an Associate Member of the West European Union (WEU), by virtue of the fact that it is not, nor is it likely to be, a member of the European Union (EU).
Other institutions of the post-Cold War security architecture in Europe have not been designed to offer hard protection or assurances, anyway. As a result, NATO ally Turkey can no longer count on its protection, presumably still in force.

**Security Challenges in the 1990s: Old and New.**

While for the sake of convenience one can categorize today's security challenges as “new,” and “old,” one would need to note the interconnections and linkages among them. Through a process of cross-mutation, new and old challenges get tied to each other at various junctures of time and space, thus acquiring complex and novel new dimensions. For example, the security challenge from Greece is old, but it has acquired altogether new dimensions in the 1990s when Athens is pursuing a strategy of the encirclement of Turkey by promoting an anti-Turkish coalition among Greece, Syria and Armenia, three neighboring countries not reputed for their friendship for Turkey.

**The Threat from Greece and Cyprus.**

The perception of Greece as the single most important security threat is at its zenith today in Turkey. This is ironic compared to the nearly half a century of the Cold War when this perception was not so all-pervasive, but when the two countries even went to the brink of war several times.

There is a qualitative difference in the nature of the Greek threat in the post-Cold War era. Previously, Greece posed a threat to Turkish interests in the Aegean and Cyprus. In the 1980s, immediately upon winning entry into the European Union (European Community then), it concentrated its diplomatic energies on barring Turkey's admission into the processes of European integration. Thus, the primary Greek objectives with regard to Turkey were to gain exclusive control over the Aegean, and indirectly over Cyprus; and, to secure Turkey's exclusion from Europe.
In the changed circumstances of the 1990s, Greek strategic objectives with regard to Turkey have been broadened to include the following: 1) to entertain, in Greek strategic planning, the possibility that Turkey might be headed for dismemberment by Kurdish separatism spearheaded by the PKK; and, 2) to promote the formation of an anti-Turkey regional coalition in Turkey's immediate neighborhood in the south and east by exploiting the strains in Turkey's relations with Syria and Armenia. The following pages will discuss Turkish views of the two new elements in the Greek strategy towards Turkey in the 1990s. The traditional conflict over the Aegean and Cyprus and the struggle to bar Turkey from Europe will not be addressed here.

The logic behind the two new elements incorporated into Greek strategic thinking with regard to Turkey was simple. A Turkey that might be embroiled in a country-wide civil war against Kurdish separatism; a Turkey that might be isolated by and subjected to the pressures of a coalition of unfriendly forces on its borders in the south and the east; thus a Turkey that would find itself much beleaguered domestically and externally would give Greece the freedom to pursue the realization of its objectives on the Aegean, and possibly also those on the western coasts of Turkey.

Turkey has repeatedly charged that Greece, encouraged into such thinking by the PKK's terrorist successes, has viewed the latter as a natural ally in its struggle against Turkey, extending it political and material support in order to facilitate the division of Turkey at no cost to itself.

Clearly Kurdish separatism and its terrorist arm, the PKK, have played into the hands of Turkey's antagonists in the immediate region. Any country with grievances against Turkey theoretically could, and in many cases actually have used the issue to pressure Turkey into "correct behavior." This has been true most critically for Syria, and to a lesser degree for Iraq, Iran, Armenia, and Russia. While most European countries and Washington have tried to deal with
the challenge posed to Turkish territorial integrity by Kurdish separatism by applying a human rights perspective and an anti-terrorism posture, Turkey's neighbors in the east have been bound by no such constraints that inherently showed deference to the systemic features and norms of the international order which honor the territorial integrity of states. Generally speaking, Turkey's immediate neighbors have viewed the issue of Kurdish separatism more like a zero-sum game whose successful exploitation was anticipated to serve their respective self-interest. In the event that Turkey ultimately lost to the separatists and was divided, in the zero-sum thinking Turkey's loss would automatically result in gains for them, above all for Greece and Syria.

It is in this frame of mind that Turkey has been watching with concern the progression of national and regional initiatives towards the creation of what appears to be an anti-Turkey grouping in its immediate vicinity, spearheaded by Greece and Syria. The first formal manifestation of this process was the signing of a defense cooperation agreement between Greece and Syria in June 1995. In response to expressions of concern by Turkey, Syria apparently immediately assured Ankara that the agreement did not give Greece a right to use Syrian air bases.

Between 1995-98, the diplomatic horizon of Greece vastly expanded as it concerned Greece's anti-Turkish strategy. Greece simultaneously engaged in a bilateral and multilateral diplomatic campaign, first, to establish good working relations with Damascus, Teheran and Erevan on a one-on-one basis, and, second, to promote the idea of a regional grouping between Greece, a Balkan country, and three physically and culturally distant countries among whom no tradition of institutionalized multilateral cooperation had ever existed before. All of a sudden in 1995, Greece decided to launch a diplomatic initiative and to present itself as a leading external force willing and capable...
of making a contribution to regional peace and stability to the east of Turkey.

Since 1995, a pattern of annual consultations called Trilateral Meetings have taken shape among Greece, Iran, and Armenia with the participation of their respective foreign ministers. The first meeting took place in Athens in 1995, the second in Teheran in 1996, and the third in Athens in 1997. The fourth, and final, Trilateral Meeting was held in Teheran on September 9, 1998. In the meantime, numerous high-level bilateral visits have been exchanged among the three capitals during which a series of trade, communications, energy, and military cooperation agreements were concluded.

What is important at this point is the perception that an anti-Turkey impulse appears to have energized the momentum for cooperation among Greece, Syria, Teheran, and Armenia since 1995. The fact that these contacts have not yet assumed a militarily significant phase capable of posing a coordinated military challenge to Turkey fades in significance from a long term perspective. What one is witnessing in the Athens-Syria-Teheran-Erevan interaction is a process that has the potential to be dangerous to Turkey's long-term interests. No country would feel safe in the long term if and when it is encircled by a potential coalition of three hostile states, namely Greece, Syria, and Armenia. The Iranian motive in joining this explicitly antagonistic grouping is more ambivalent, more complex.

In summary, Turkey at this point can only determine the presence of the Greek intention to leapfrog to Turkey's east in order make life difficult for Turkey in its own vicinity. The arguments and statements of officials like Defense Minister Yerasimos Arsenis, who have declared that Greece should conclude military alliances with Iran, Iraq, Syria, Armenia, Russia, and Bulgaria to establish an anti-Turkish bloc, verify the Greek thinking behind these developments.
The military cooperation agreement between Turkey and Israel reached in February 1996 should be seen against the background, first and foremost, of growing Greek-Syrian ties in 1995. While the Arab world has reacted to Turkish-Israeli military cooperation angrily, they have failed to take into account the impact of Greek-Syrian defense cooperation on Turkish perceptions of threat.

**Cyprus.**

Two developments in the 1990s concerning Cyprus pose serious challenges to Turkish security—the decision by the EU to admit Cyprus as a full member at the end of accession negotiations, and the purchase by Nicosia of reportedly 30 S-300 surface-to-air missiles from Russia for deployment in southern Cyprus in Fall 1998.

Turkey is opposed to the accession of Cyprus to the EU above all else on the argument that the Guarantee Agreements of 1960 rule out the accession of Cyprus before that of Turkey. In other words, the proposed accession of Cyprus to the EU would be in violation of the international agreements that created the republic in the first place—until after Turkey has joined.

Obviously neither the arguments of Ankara nor the Turkish-Cypriot government’s opposition to being excluded from the accession negotiations (except on the EU’s own terms) have carried weight before Brussels. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and Ankara have been forced to seek their own solution to coping with the approaching new order on the island: the Greek part of the island becoming EU-territory, and the Turkish part of the island being left to struggle for survival in the shadow of a hostile neighbor protected now by the EU hat. The answer has been agreement for eventual integration between the two. Clearly, this is not the best of solutions for the long-term interests of either the Turkish-Cypriots or of Turkey. On the other hand, Brussels’s decision to admit Cyprus in the first round of EU enlargement has set in
motion this dynamic that has inherently invited a new, perhaps irreversible stage in over 20 years of transitional de facto division of the island.

Developments in the military field are not promising either. The upgrading of military relations between Athens and Nicosia with the signing of a military cooperation agreement and the adoption of a joint defense doctrine in 1993-94, and the planned deployment of Russian-made S-300 air-defense missiles at the recently opened air base at Paphos are all very serious challenges to Turkish security. Turkey has warned that it would not tolerate their deployment. Greece, for its part, has declared that it would view Turkish military strikes against Greek-Cyprus a casus belli.

In summary, the triangular relations between Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus have reached an unprecedented level of complexity and tension since mid-1990s. In addition, with the planned deployment of the S-300 SAMs on Cyprus, Russia will have gained, for the first time in history, a direct military/technical presence on the island. Moscow and some circles in the West argue that the sale of these weapons systems to Cyprus is a commercial rather than a strategic deal. However, simple strategic logic defies this argument; that logic dictates that a power like Russia not overlook the enormous strategic advantages such a deal would accrue to its power position in the eastern Mediterranean especially at a time when NATO's eastward expansion, the Partnership for Peace (PfP) activities in Central Asia, and the West's intense engagement in the Caspian Sea region have been taken very hard by the Russian political class.

**On The Brink of War with Syria.**

On October 1, 1998, Turkey issued the strongest warning to Syria to date to immediately stop supporting PKK-terrorism or face Turkish retaliation. In the days since, diplomatic channels and mediation attempts by Egypt and Iran have somewhat defused the anticipation of a
Turkish-Syrian war. This does not rule out, however, the possible use of force at some point in the near future for, as the leaderships of all major political parties have agreed, Syria's role in PKK terrorism has reached intolerable proportions, and Turkey is using its right of self-defense when threatening the use of force. The Turkish action thus comes at a moment when there is a national consensus that the country will not tolerate more damage from PKK terrorism that is sheltered and materially aided by Turkey's neighbors, most dangerously by Syria.

Is there a reasonable motive for Syria to harbor ill-feelings for Turkey? The answer lies in the following: Syria is a country which refuses to recognize Turkey's international boundaries, claiming for itself the province of Hatay, which acceded to Turkey in 1939 following a 20-year French protection since the end of World War I, which saw the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire's Arab and Balkan lands. Damascus and Baghdad also resent Turkey's grandiose dam projects on the Euphrates River, which it has been developing on an accelerated pace only over the last 20 years. No other major upstream country has waited this long to exploit the water resources it derives from such major transboundary river systems, willfully allowing the downstream countries to get unlimited benefits from unlimited flow of water. On the basis of a Turkish-Syrian agreement worked out during the tenure of Prime Minister Turgut Ozal, Turkey is obligated to release 500 cubic meters of water per second at the Turkish-Syrian border, an obligation which it has been faithfully honoring.

Northern Iraq.

Northern Iraq is another sanctuary from where the PKK has conducted its operations against Turkey with impunity. The transformation of Northern Iraq virtually into a no man's land following the Gulf War, with Kurdish warlords roaming the area, has allowed the PKK the freedom to
engage in a campaign of inflicting unacceptable damage to Turkey in human and material terms.

Clearly, the unsettled question of the future status of Iraq in the regional order nourishes a most destabilizing neighborhood for Turkey. Control over Northern Iraq by Baghdad would most probably have curtailed the most destructive aspects of PKK activity. President Saddam Hussein is frustrated with Turkey primarily because of the latter's support of the Gulf War and the United Nations (U.N.) resolutions, and therefore takes anti-Turkey positions at times. Bilateral relations would be normalized, however, if Iraq resumed a normal place in the region—which would, in the first instance, require it to honor its disarmament obligations to the U.N.

The PKK is only one dimension, the armed dimension, of the question of Northern Iraq. As mentioned in the Introduction, the political and diplomatic dimension of the future of Northern Iraq is of utmost importance to Turkish security. Turks feels that any federated Kurdish state in Northern Iraq would affect Turkish security extremely negatively—hence the deep concern over Washington's revival of Kurdish autonomy in Northern Iraq.

**Weapons of Mass Destruction.**

Three countries in the Middle East which are known by the international community either to have had some type of WMD capability or to entertain the intention eventually to develop it are Iraq, Syria, and Iran. All three are also noted for their ballistic missile capability. These very countries are Turkey's immediate neighbors. Turkey, for its part, possesses neither the capability in any of these weapons nor the intention to develop them.

Of the three, the potential threat from Iraq's WMD and missile capabilities have been eliminated to an important extent as a result of UNSCOM's operations on the ground in Iraq—until they were halted by Baghdad last summer.
There is no assurance, however, that Baghdad will desist from a concerted effort to reacquire WMD capability in the event that Saddam Hussein somehow succeeds in ridding Iraq of UNSCOM’s thorough and intrusive inspections in the future.

Until recently, Turkey tended to rationalize the growing WMD missile capability to its south in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, believing that Israel was the potential target. However, the current confrontation with Syria has sharpened the sense of danger to Turkey from Syrian missiles and chemical weapons, just as the Gulf War in 1991 had done concerning Iraqi missiles and chemical weapons. We did not know then that Iraq had virtually mastered nuclear weapons capability. Iran’s nuclear and missile programs are serious potential security challenges not just to Turkey, but to the region as a whole. Iran insists that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, and that it has passed the IAEA inspections that verified Iran’s compliance with the NPT. American and Israeli intelligence communities believe otherwise, pressuring Russia, Iran’s major source of supply of nuclear technology, not to sell sensitive technologies to Iran. Under pressure from U.S. President William Clinton shortly before the U.S.-Russia summit in Moscow in 1995, Russian President Boris Yeltsin agreed not to sell Iran gas-centrifuge uranium-enrichment technology, which could be used to make bomb-grade uranium, and not to train Iranian nuclear physicists.

This incident was illuminating also from another perspective: that such a critical deal could be made without authorization by the Kremlin or the Russian Foreign Ministry, as neither the Kremlin nor the Foreign Ministry purportedly had prior knowledge of the intention of then Russian Minister of Atomic Energy Viktor Mikhailov to sell this technology to Iran.

Amid the controversy about Iran’s real intentions concerning nuclear weapons, Turkey and other non-nuclear weapon states in the region will have to keep in mind that
Iraq advanced towards a nuclear weapons capability clandestinely, while at the same time seeming to adhere to the NPT.

In July 1998, Iran successfully tested the Shahab-3 medium-range missile. Iranian officials described the test-firing as a defensive move aimed at creating a balance in the region, meaning specifically a balance that would neutralize the American presence in the Gulf. The demonstration of Iran’s medium-range missile capability is certainly not a welcome development from the perspective of Turkey, especially in view of the fact that Iran is strongly suspected—despite strong denials—of pursuing nuclear weapons capability. It is interesting that, following the firing, Iran took pains to send a message virtually to the whole world that none of its neighbors seemed troubled by the successful testing of the missile.

**Russia.**

Turkey and Russia do not contest each other over any hard sovereignty questions. The closest sovereignty-related controversy between the two is the Turkish decision since Summer 1994 to regulate the traffic going through the Turkish Straits in order to improve the safety and security of the city of Istanbul and its environs against the potential risks and hazards of projected increasing volumes of tanker traffic to be carrying Caspian Sea oil as it is shipped to world markets. Russia argues that the Turkish move is in violation of the Montreux Treaty of 1936 that establishes the legal regime of these straits. It charges that Turkey is motivated by a desire to eliminate Russian territory and the port of Novorossisk as the most attractive route for the export of Caspian Sea oil to world markets.

The absence of hard sovereignty disagreements has not meant the absence of political tensions, however. Rivalry for influence first and foremost in the Southern Caucasus and secondarily in Central Asia has been the fundamental cause of the uneasiness in Turkish-Russian relations in the 1990s.
The competition over the main pipeline that would transport Caspian Sea oil to world markets is a manifestation of this rivalry in the economic/commercial realm with significant long-term political implications.

Chechen separatism in Russia and Kurdish separatism in Turkey have adversely affected the two countries' mutual security perceptions, each accusing the other of instigating separatism in order to undermine the other's territorial integrity. On the other hand, while no Turkish parliamentarian has been cited for his activities in support of Chechen separatism, Russia's Duma members have been.

Russia's regional diplomacy in general and its arms exports to Iran and the Greek-Cypriot government in particular are among the most serious challenges to Turkish security interests—even if Moscow seems to stand only in the background. Like Greece, Moscow seems to see utility in the idea of an anti-Turkey coalition among Greece, Iran, and Armenia, as suggested by ample evidence in official and unofficial statements to this effect. As mentioned before, the Turkish-Israeli military cooperation agreement of February 1996 emerged against this background of unfriendly regional diplomacy.

Notwithstanding these tensions, Russia is not likely to confront Turkey with a conventional threat in the near-to-medium term for two main reasons: political and economic stability that underwrites a country's military muscle does not seem likely to dawn on the Russian state and society in the near future, and political and economic independence in the Southern Caucasus—except in Armenia—where Russian and Turkish long-term strategic interests compete with each other most intensely seems to be getting firmer roots. The nature of Russian-Armenian relations obviously defies this generalization.

On the other hand, one cannot rule out circumstances that might lead to another type of Russia, an aggressive Russia: the coming to power of Russian ultra-nationalists in Moscow, and a new round of fighting between Armenia and
Azerbaijan in which one side might seem to be headed for defeat. A contingency of this nature might ultimately drive Turkey and Russia into the imbroglio, the former to defend Azerbaijan and the latter to defend Armenia. Russian military bases and Russian troops in their various roles scattered around Georgia and Armenia—and directly at the borders with Turkey—and upgraded forces of the North Caucasus Military District legitimized in the CFE’s adaptation in 1997 will undoubtedly be activated in order to repulse any Turkish action against Armenia. If things do not go right in such a contingency, Russia might be tempted to resort either to nuclear blackmail, or failing to get Turkey to retreat, might use limited nuclear strikes. The official military doctrine and Russian elite’s thinking about the utility of tactical nuclear weapons in regional conflicts have already set in place the conceptual and political framework to make resort to tactical nuclear weapons in such contingencies politically acceptable and legitimate.

Conclusion.

As the discussion in the previous pages suggest, Turkish security perceptions are dominated primarily by concerns over long-term Greek intentions to gain control over the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean, and over the multi-faceted regional strategy of encirclement that it has been pursuing since mid-1990s to realize those aims.

Syrian claims on the Turkish province of Hatay and implicit claims by a newly independent Armenia on parts of eastern Turkey have turned them into potential allies of Greece. It appears that in the new scheme of things in Greek strategic thinking, a weakened and possibly divided Turkey would cease to be an obstacle to the realization of Greek aspirations in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean.

The challenge of Kurdish separatism to Turkish security, a challenge with powerful domestic roots, has nevertheless been magnified in its scope only in conjunction with the nurturing it has been receiving from the external
environment. Turks believe that Syria, and to a lesser extent Iraq and Iran, have been extending material support to the PKK, recognized as a terrorist organization by several leading governments in Europe and by Washington. This belief has been documented by Turkish authorities—hence the recent confrontation with Syria. PKK terrorism and the support it receives from Turkey's neighbors not only threaten Turkish territorial integrity, but they forestall the consolidation of Turkish democracy.

The consequences of attempts by Turkey's revisionist neighbors to tamper with the territorial integrity of Turkey would, if eventually successful, naturally be extremely destabilizing for a very broad region stretching from the Balkans to the Persian Gulf and to Central Asia, threatening the geopolitical status quo for nearly two dozen countries inhabiting this vast space.