

to the conflict. This requires concentration, pressure and the credible coercive potential now available – with London, more than ever, responsible for what happens. The British government has usually been backward in going forward. So often pusillanimous realists, Messrs Major, Rifkind and Hurd appear to have

added a little courage to their realism. There should be no going back: the outcome might be honourable failure and withdrawal or, more likely, success. After three years of war in Bosnia, the time has come to press it to a close.

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NOTES

1. See James Gow 'The use of coercion in the Yugoslav conflict', *The World Today*, November 1992. The understanding of coercion presented here draws on

Thomas C. Schelling, 'The Diplomacy of Violence', taken from John Garnett (Ed.), *Theories of Peace and Security: A Reader in Contemporary Strategic Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1970).

Bosnia II: a Turkish critique

When it became clear soon after the end of the war in the Gulf in March 1991 that Yugoslavia was falling apart, Turkey was on the one hand trying to broaden its local contacts (particularly with the Bosnian and the Macedonian leaderships which were quite eager to cultivate its friendship), while on the other looking to the West to see what attitude the United States and the West European countries would adopt. Following the declaration in June 1991 by the then US Secretary of State, James Baker, that Washington was committed to the preservation of Yugoslavia and that no secessionist movement was, therefore, to be encouraged, Turkey also became a supporter of this line of policy. There were probably other reasons for Turkey to fall in line with the United States and the European Community. One was the fact that Yugoslavia had not been unfriendly towards Turkey during the 1980s and that the government in Belgrade had even condemned Bulgaria for carrying out a kind of 'administrative' genocide of its large Turkish minority through a campaign of 'Bulgarisation' of their names. The uncertainty which was prevalent in the West at the time may have contributed to the formulation of Ankara's policy.

When the war began in late June 1991, first in Slovenia and then spreading to Croatia in August of the same year, Turkey simply followed the West's argument that what was happening in Yugoslavia was basically a civil war, and that the Serbianised Yugoslav Federal Army (JNA) was the legal force trying to hold together a country which was otherwise tearing itself apart. In the face of enormous destruction and 'ethnic cleansing' around Knin as well as in Eastern Slavonia (particularly in Vukovar), and also despite the fact that Germany had begun to voice its reservations about the JNA's attitude, Turkey became uneasy but in the end preferred to turn a blind eye. And the Turkish press, which was getting much of its news coverage from the Western media, concluded that, although there were high casualties and a large amount of destruction in Croatia, the Serbs were, after all, taking their revenge upon the Croats who had 'butchered the Serbian population' during the Second World War in collaboration with the Axis forces.

The Turkish intelligentsia largely subscribed to this view. However, Turkey's passive and silent stance was to undergo a sharp change when the war was extended to Bosnia and Hercegovina – although here again, Ankara initially endeavoured not to fall out with the West. With the Serbian assault on Bosnia in full swing at the beginning of April 1992, Ankara at first hoped that the armed conflict would be confined to the Serbs and the Croats in Bosnia and Hercegovina. But the unfolding events made Turkey realise that the main target of the Serbian *Blitzkrieg* would be the

Moslem population. As a result, Ankara felt compelled to formulate a policy which required intensive diplomacy on two fronts: the West and the Moslem countries.

On the Western front, Ankara pressed its friends and allies (particularly within NATO as well as in the European Community) to adopt a more serious attitude towards Bosnia. Rather than wait and expect the West to act, Turkey tried to galvanise the United States and Europe into firm action. Turkish representatives were also active at the UN and the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to try to rally the support of the Western countries to put pressure on Serbia to stop the war. Following the impositions of UN sanctions on Serbia in May 1992, Ankara, while expressing its satisfaction, made it quite clear that the trade embargo had come too late to produce the desired effect. Indeed, a few months – if not weeks – after the imposition of the sanctions it became obvious that the Serbian war machine could hardly be stopped by these half-hearted measures.

From this point onwards, Turkey took a further step and proposed a form of military action in which, the Ankara government said, it would take part by sending a few squadrons of F-16s to carry out selective air strikes. This plan was to have been put into operation under the auspices of the UN or of NATO and would have required the bombardment of Serbian positions in Bosnia and Hercegovina. This, Ankara believed, would make it clear to Belgrade that the West was taking the events in Bosnia seriously. Turkey also believed that only such an action would stop the Serbian war machine. Indeed, Ankara proposed that, following the initial air strikes, Serbia and the Serb forces in Bosnia and Hercegovina should be given a brief interval in the form of an ultimatum, stipulating that unless Serbia behaved itself and recognised the independence of Bosnia, thus putting an immediate end to its assault, the bombing of the Serb positions would intensify.

However, at the time there was no intention to undertake any such action on the part of the West – not in the United States, where the Bush Administration was engrossed in one of the most domestically oriented election campaigns, nor in Britain, where the government had already formulated a decisive policy line. By the end of August 1992, it became evident that the West would not take any tangible steps to stop the carnage in Bosnia. And Turkey publicly condemned this policy.

On the Moslem front, Ankara had been very active as well, calling for an emergency meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. At that meeting, held in Istanbul on 17 and 18 June 1992, all the Moslem countries recognised Bosnia and

Hercegovina, thus demonstrating that they had become aware of the existence of European Moslems such as the Bosnians. Following Turkey's efforts, the Moslem countries put in place a fund for Bosnia which later became one of the most important sources of finance for the government in Sarajevo. Nevertheless, Turkey treated its efforts to rally support for Bosnia among the Moslem countries as subordinate – or, at most, complimentary – to its diplomatic activities in the West. Even when Ankara failed to prod its allies in the West into firm action, its diplomacy in the Moslem countries remained reduced to a secondary role, despite the fact that Ankara continued to cultivate relations with the Moslem countries with a view to acting together and possibly putting pressure on the UN and the Security Council.

However, the 'no' from the West to any kind of military intervention and the worsening of the military situation on the ground in Bosnia seem to have frustrated Turkey, with the result that the government in Ankara began to extricate itself from the frontline position regarding Bosnia. The assumption that talking about Bosnia and Hercegovina and criticising the West for not taking a stronger line against Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs would only offer the opposition a golden opportunity to attack the government and perhaps provide the fundamentalists with an effective weapon, became prevalent in government circles.

From the beginning of January 1993, Turkey therefore decided to discontinue its active diplomacy regarding Bosnia. When the Bosnian Serbs rejected the Vance–Owen plan, and when the Americans in April–May 1993 came out in favour of lifting the Bosnian arms embargo to be supported by air strikes ('lift-and-strike'), Turkey simply sat back and watched the British persuade the US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, that such a plan would not stop the war and that, if anything, it would simply add fuel to the already rapidly worsening situation. But Turkey, instead of taking a back-seat in the diplomatic activity, should have helped the United States at that point, by advising the Americans and explaining to them that the policy of appeasement adopted by the British government could no longer be tolerated if the stability in the region was to be upheld. The issue of Bosnia could well have been turned into a bilateral problem with those countries, above all Britain, which strongly opposed the 'lift-and-strike' strategy.

What steps could Turkey have taken, and could still take, to induce Britain to soften its opposition both to the 'lift-and-strike' proposal and to the present suggestion of exempting the Bosnian government from the arms embargo? Turkey could have told Britain openly in April–May 1993 that London's appeasement had failed and that Britain's decisive opposition to considering any new policy had handed all the anti-Western forces in Turkey as well as in all the Moslem countries concerned an effective weapon. If Britain had remained unimpressed by these arguments, then Ankara could have made it clear to London that some punitive actions would be set in train.

The first of these could have taken the form of expelling British planes from 'Operation Provide Comfort', which operates from bases in Turkey to prevent any encroachments by Saddam Hussein on northern Iraq. To prove to Washington that such an initiative was by no means inspired – nor even tinged – by hostility towards the West in general, it would have been possible to invite more American war planes to replace the British ones. Another punitive action could have taken the form of a trade embargo on British goods, which could easily have been encouraged by a tacit government go-ahead. Italian and German goods could have been promoted instead.

While taking issue with Britain on a bilateral level, intensive diplomacy could have continued on the Moslem front. Turkey could have formulated and then put forward some policies along lines similar to those of other Western-oriented Moslem countries. For instance, the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia could have been persuaded under Turkish pressure to reconsider their decision regarding some of the large contracts which have been awarded to British firms. The Saudis, moreover, could have been persuaded not to buy British Tornados but instead to buy war-planes from countries which pursued a more positive policy towards Bosnia. The effect of these measures on British industry is obvious – quite apart from the blow which Turkey's expulsion of British war-planes would have dealt to London's prestige. It would, moreover, have stripped the British government of an important leverage over the future of Iraq, in particular, and the Middle East in general, where in the past few years Britain has found itself in constant competition with the United States over the sale of arms. It is important to remember, for instance, that it is thanks to the Saudi decision to buy Tornados that several factories in Britain managed to survive the recession in late 1992 and in 1993.

But instead of studying all the angles carefully and trying to understand who was to blame for the unfolding genocide in Bosnia, the Turkish government continued to criticise 'the West' as if it were a unit. All the Western institutions such as the European Union, the CSCE and others received an equal share of Turkish criticism. However, hiding behind these organisations and pursuing the issue half-heartedly, as Turkey was doing, was fundamentally wrong on two counts. First, because it contributed to anti-Western arguments, which in turn undermined Ankara's own position. Second, the Turkish government was no longer taken as seriously as in the first half of 1992, since Turkey's complaints about international organisations were in any case largely being shared by a number of Western countries, including Britain.

General, non-committal statements made mostly after a tragic event in Bosnia therefore gave the impression that Turkey had learned to live with the genocidal war there. This policy was partly responsible for the public demonstrations in front of the US Embassy in Ankara in April 1994, after some private news channels had announced that the Serbs had used chemical weapons in Gorazde, killing hundreds of people. Since the general view held among ordinary people in Turkey is that whatever the West does or does not do is normally manipulated by the United States, the demonstrators failed to realise that they were in front of the wrong Embassy, and that it was Britain which had consistently resisted any active policy initiated by Washington in favour of Bosnia.

This British line has followed a clear pattern. Every time the Americans came along with an action plan, the British found a way of dissuading the US Administration. This pattern has not changed and is likely to be repeated in the near future. Punitive actions against Britain which have been open to Turkey all along are still valid. Ankara should be prepared to consider such actions – certainly not to undermine Anglo-Turkish relations but to prevent misperceptions about Britain forming in the minds of the Turkish people. Such an action would undoubtedly help the present British government to realise that its Bosnia policy will, in the foreseeable future, damage its interests in some of the Western-oriented Moslem countries: an undesirable rift which goes against London's long tradition of cooperation with Islam.

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