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TURKEY AND PAKISTAN: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Ishtiaq AHMAD

Turkey’s relationship with Pakistan has mostly been above and beyond the state-to-state level ties generally characterizing the nature and dynamics of international system. It is only recently that some snags in this relationship have become visible—an unhappy course that needs to be checked by the leadership of the two countries. Some scholars describe Turkish-Pakistan ties as “imaginary”, while others perceive them to be “exemplary”. Both opinions are relevant. The relationship is “imaginary”, because despite being based on centuries-old ethnic, religious, political and cultural connections, they have mostly failed to bring concrete material benefits to the two nations. For instance, the annual trade volume between the two countries continues to stand at the dismal level of merely $150 million. At the same time, relations between the two countries have traditionally been “exemplary”, because the inherently cooperative denoting them has not just been confined to peacetime situations; rather, it has become more visible when either Turkey or Pakistan has been in dire strait. Nations live in an anarchic world, where every country in its external ties aims only to achieve its real-politick ends. However, such relationships are usually not time-tested. They become less important, or even vanish, when the interests are served. On the other hand, relations based on idealism, even if they are economically unproductive, transcend the tides of history, and their real worth comes to light only during critical situations. Thus, for any country, it should indeed be a blessing to have a friend on whom it can look for help during the times of need. Seen in this context, the traditional course of Turkish-Pakistan relationship can be “exemplary” for other nations.

This paper analyses the multi-faceted relationship between Turkey and Pakistan in a historical perspective. Employing the classical diplomatic historian approach, I trace the millennium-old roots of relations between the Turks and Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, most of whom opted for Pakistan in 1947. The historical evolution of these ties is divided into three distinct phases: from the Ottoman period to the era of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, from the creation of Pakistan until 1990, and relations between the two countries since then. The main events which have determined the currents of this relationship during each phase are narrated and analyzed in order to draw valid conclusions. Continuity and change
are two words that best explain the evolution of Turkish-Pakistan relationship, the trends that are visible in it at present, and the emerging features of this relationship at the start of the Twenty-First Century. One consistent theme of the relationship is that it has mostly survived periodic ideological and political changes occurring in each country. In particular, we must appreciate the fact that despite constitutionally being two different political entities—Turkey a secular republic, and Pakistan an Islamic republic—the governments and peoples of the two countries have shown the necessary political will to strengthen their historical bonds and foster mutual ties at all levels. Over the years, however, the key problem for the successive leaders of Turkey and Pakistan has been how to translate the political will into actual policies and their implementation. Had this happened, the relationship between the two countries might have remained immune from discouraging trends threatening to hamper it presently.

While continuity remains an overbearing factor in Turkish-Pakistan relationship, at the turn of the last century and beginning of the present, a transformation from idealistic stage towards a realistic period is increasingly becoming obvious in relations between the two countries. The positive aspect of this change is visible in the growth of private Turkish investment in Pakistan since the start of the 1990s. The ongoing transformation of ties, however, also has a negative dimension: while the continuity factor remains a binding force in Turkish-Pakistan relations, the diverging aspects of relationship as an outcome of the ongoing transformation in these ties threaten to bring the two traditional friends apart. This negative trend in relationship can be overcome if the present leaders of Turkey and Pakistan fully appreciate the historical foundations of relations between Indian Muslims/Pakistan and Ottomans/Republic of Turkey.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Some historians have described the history of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent as the history of Central Asian Turks. Leaving aside the controversial issue of the great migration to India of Aryans and the Huns (known as the forefathers of the Turks) and considering only the emergence of the Muslim Turks in Anatolia, it can be safely said that Turkish-Pakistan relations have a history of nearly a millennium. The Seljuks who rose to power in Anatolia in the eleventh century and their contemporaries, the Ghaznavids, who, under the leadership of Sultan Mehmood Ghaznavi, invaded the subcontinent seventeen times, had the same origin. Almost all the Muslim rulers of the subcontinent, from the establishment of Delhi Sultanate in the thirteenth century (with the exception of
Sayyed and Lodhi dynasties) until the demise of Mogul dynasty in the nineteenth century, were Central Asian Turks. Even though the Islamic culture had found its way in the subcontinent long before the arrival of Muslim rulers of Turkish origin, its real impact was felt only after the foundation of the Ghaznavid state, followed by successive Muslim dynasties of Ghoris, Aybecks, Altmish, Khiljis and Moguls. Even though Arab ruler Muhammad Bin Qasim had conquered and ruled parts of northern Indian subcontinent as far back as eighth century, Islam was popularized in the subcontinent by Sufis hailing from Central Asia representing pacifist Islamic creed of the Turks. It was for this reason that in the subcontinent, the word ‘Muslim’ became synonymous with ‘Turk’ and the notion of “two countries, one nation” became popular. The Turkish culture particularly influenced the Muslim populace of the subcontinent’s northern region, of which present Pakistan was carved out in 1947.

Political relations between the Turks of Anatolia and Indian Muslims were established soon after the conquest of Constantinople by Sultan Muhammad II in 1453. Muhammad Shah I of Deccan’s Bahmani dynasty sent his prime minister, Muhammad Ghavan, known as ‘Khwaja-i-Jahan’, with a letter of felicitation to the victorious Sultan. The establishment of the Ottoman Caliphate had created a strong religious link between the Turks and Indian Muslims, and the Turkish Sultan in his capacity as Caliph came to be regarded as the religious head of the Muslim Ummah and a symbol of Muslim unity. However, Delhi Sultanate’s ties with Ottoman Sultans remained transitory in nature. It was only after the establishment of the Mogul dynasty by the first Mogul ruler, Zaheeruddin Babar that these ties began to be consolidated. In fact, the Mogul kingdom itself was an extension of the Ottoman empire. Mogul emperors received militarily help from the Ottomans, whenever it was required. In his autobiography, Tuzuk-i-Babar, Babar acknowledges the contribution of two Turkish gun-makers, Mustafa Rumi and Ali Quli, in building his artillery, which helped him defeat the last ruler of the Delhi Sultanate, Sikander Lodhi, in 1526. When the Portuguese started posing serious threat to the sea-borne trade between the Indian coast and seaports of the Mediterranean and northern Europe during Mogul emperor Humayun’s reign, Sultan Suleyman, the Magnificent, sent a naval expedition to the Indian ocean, which finally brought an end to the Portuguese menace. However, the credit for establishing regular political contacts with the Ottoman Sultans goes to Mogul emperor Shahjehan. It was during his rule that the Moguls and Ottomans started regularly exchanging their emissaries. While the later half of the eighteenth century and the start of the nineteenth century marked the decline of the Mogul suzerainty, Indian Muslims continued to perceive the Ottoman Caliph and Turkish nation as the citadel of Muslim unity and power.
With the erosion of Mogul power in the late eighteenth century, the British started to consolidate their political hold in the subcontinent. Their efforts in acquiring a foothold in southern subcontinent’s Deccan plateau met a strong resistance by Sultan Tipu, resulting in a series of battles. The only external help that Sultan Tipu could look for was from the Ottoman Sultans, Abdul Hamid I and Selim III. Sultan Tipu wrote several letters, carried personally to the Ottoman Court by his envoys, intended to secure the Caliphate’s confirmation of his title to the throne of Mysore and Ottoman military help against the British. While Sultan Abdul Hamid I granted him the title to the throne of Mysore, Sultan Tipu failed to secure military help from him and his successor Sultan Selim III because Turkey at that time considered British help vital for maintaining a balance of power in southeastern Europe, and it considered French invasion of Egypt a greater threat for Muslims than the British colonizing campaign in the subcontinent. Supported by the French, Sultan Tipu was finally defeated by the British. After British victory in the War of Independence in 1857, which was the last Muslim attempt to save the Mogul rule, the suzerainty over the subcontinent passed to the British Crown.

Since Muslims had ruled the subcontinent for several centuries, the end of the Mogul rule and the beginning of the British colonial empire made their political outlook gloomy. After this debacle of the mid-nineteenth century, the only Muslim country to remain independent was Turkey under the Ottoman Caliph. Therefore, it was natural on the part of Indian Muslims to look towards Turkey as the last hope for the Muslim world unity. Consequently, religious and cultural relations between the Turks and Indian Muslims were strengthened. The challenges of the age, especially faced by the Ottoman empire in the form of growing external security threats, were bound to bring the two Muslim people further together. The first occasion when Indian Muslims openly demonstrated their tremendous sympathy and support for the Turks was the Turco-Russian war of 1877. Subcontinent’s leading Muslim literary figures, like Maulana Shibli Nomani, in their poetry and prose, glorified the heroic exploits of Turkish commander Ghazi Osman Pasha in that war. Indian Muslims also celebrated the Turkish victory in the 1897 Turco-Greek war.

As the nineteenth century concluded, it was abundantly clear that a European conspiracy, hatched primarily by Britain, for dividing the Ottoman empire was in the offing. So, from then onwards, whenever European powers subjected the Turks to any grave excess, Muslims of the subcontinent rose in protest, little caring about British repressive reaction. By then, they had also been sufficiently inspired by great Muslim scholar Sayyid Jamaluddin Afghani’s idea of Pan-Islamism, which
emphasized Muslim unity and cultural rejuvenation as a hedge against machinations of Christian Europe. Indian Muslims were convinced that Turkey, the citadel of Islam, must remain independent and free from encroachments of Christian Europe. Even though the nerve-center for the Pan-Islamic movement was Istanbul, Muslim leaders from all walks of the subcontinent life became its adherents. Sayyid Jamaluddin Afghani himself visited the subcontinent several times. Maulana Muhammad Ali, editor of the English weekly Comrade, was a true spokesman of Pan-Islamism. So was Nawab Vizarul Mulk, a close associate of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

A great Muslim scholar, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan reawakened the subcontinent Muslims from the depth of depression they had been forced into after the Mogul demise. In the late nineteenth century, he launched what is called the Aligarh Movement, whose aim was to assimilate the virtues of Western civilization and to mould the social life of subcontinent Muslims according to the exigencies of the modern times. To achieve this aim, Sir Sayyid set up educational institutions, such as the Anglo-Muhammedan College at Aligarh, and brought out publications such as the weekly Tahzeebul Akhlaq. In his articles, Sir Sayyid cited the examples of Ottoman rulers like Sultan Mahmud II and Sultan Abdul Hamid who, he argued, gave up religious prejudices and saw no harm in taking advantage of European arts and sciences, or in adopting European customs and manners. Like him, Maulana Shibli Nomani, who visited Istanbul in 1892, praised the Turks for making glorious achievements in the field of modern education in a travelogue published two years later, which was widely received by subcontinent Muslims.

However, the deep affection of Indian Muslims was only for the Turkish nation, and not for Sultan Abdul Hamid or any other Sultan. Thus, when Sultan Abdul Hamid was deposed by the Young Turks in 1909, a cross-section of Muslim leaders—including Maulana Muhammad Ali, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Nawab Vizarul Mulk, Maulana Altaf Hussain Hali and Maulana Shibli—paid warm tributes to them. But before the Young Turks could strengthen their hold, the European powers, led by Britain, started realizing their plan of dividing the Ottoman empire—beginning with the War of Tripoli, 1911, and the Balkan War of 1912-13. By this time, however, the Indian Muslim’s affinity with the Turks had crystallized to such an extent that it turned into a forceful movement throughout the subcontinent. Maulana Muhammad Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad launched a massive media and political campaign in support of the Turks, urging Indian Muslims to provide material aid to the suffering Turks. For the purpose, in addition to the weekly Comrade, Maulana Muhammad Ali started publishing daily Hamdard, Maulana
Zafar Khan brought out the daily *Zamindar*, and Abul Kalam Azad began to publish the weekly *Al-Hilal*. As a result of this dissemination campaign, subcontinent Muslims sent donations worth thousands of British Pound-Sterling to the Turkish Red Crescent to help it rehabilitate the Turks displaced during the wars of Tripoli and the Balkans. Owing to its pro-Turkish leanings, the Muslim press became a victim of the British government’s repressive policies. *Comrade, Zamindar* and *Al-Hilal* were in particular penalized. Twice, Maulana Muhammad Ali had to deposit huge sums of money as security for continuing the publication of *Comrade* after the arbitrary forfeiture of the previous security amount. What annoyed the British was “The Choice of the Turks”, a long article serialized by the paper on the eve of the First World War, castigating the British and explaining why the Turks were forced to join the Axis powers during the First World War. Later, during the War, Maulana Ali, Maulana Zafar and Maulana Azad were imprisoned, and their papers were forced to cease publication.

The defeat of Turkey in the First World War, and the collapse of the Ottoman empire, shocked the subcontinent Muslims. Britain and France had captured Constantinople, and the Ottoman Sultan became a puppet of the occupation authorities. In May 1918, British Prime Minister Lloyd George had assured Indian Muslims that regions with predominant Turkish populations, including Constantinople, would remain with the Turks. After his release from prison in December 1919, Maulana Ali led a delegation of Indian Muslims to London, which met Lloyd George and asked him to implement his pledge. Instead, the Treaty of Sevres was imposed on Turkey. Before its imposition, Greek forces invaded Smyrna (Izmir). The two unfortunate developments caused uproar among Indian Muslims, who demanded the abrogation of the Treaty of Sevres and expulsion of Greek forces. The Muslim delegation led by Maulana Ali unsuccessfully returned to the subcontinent after eight months, and joined the mass support campaign for the War of Independence launched in May 1919 by the Turkish nationalist forces led by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk against Greek forces in Anatolia. Upset by this country-wide agitation, popularly known as the Khilafat Movement (1919-1924), the British government invited a delegation of Indian Muslims in March 1921. Led by Sir Agha Khan, the delegation met Lloyd George and reiterated the demand for abrogating the Treaty of Sevres and independence of the Turks within their territories. In the end, however, what the consistent efforts of Indian Muslims could not force the British to accept, Mustafa Kemal’s sword compelled them to do. The Greeks suffered a humiliating withdrawal from Turkish land, and the British and their allies, in the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, accepted all those Turkish demands for which Ataturk had started the War of Liberation.
Throughout the Khilafat Movement days, Indian Muslims continued to agitate vigorously against the British government in support of Mustafa Kemal. They courted arrests on such a large scale that prisons all over the subcontinent had no room to accommodate them. British Government’s repressive measures resulted in the April 1919 Jalianwala Bagh massacre, kindling a mass conflagration that enveloped the entire subcontinent. In November 1919, a conference was held under the leadership of Fazal-ul-Haq, a leader of the Indian Muslim League. Mahatma Gandhi, who had by then taken over the leadership of the Indian National Congress, also attended the conference and presented his famous proposal of Non-Cooperation and Passive Resistance against the British. The outcome of the conference was the creation of an All-India Khilafat Committee, whose first meeting was attended by President of the Indian Muslim League and the Founding Father of Pakistan, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. It was at this meeting that Jinnah recommended that a delegation led by Maulana Muhammad Ali should visit European capitals, including London, to solicit support for the Turkish cause. The delegation, as stated above, visited but without any success.

The real success of the Khilafat Movement was that it served as a morale booster for the Turkish nationalist forces under Mustafa Kemal’s command. Additionally, it helped generate the much-needed financial resources for the Angora Fund from subcontinent Muslims in the form of British currency as well as gold and silver ornaments deposited voluntarily by Indian Muslim women in the Khilafat account. It was partly this financial help with which the building for the Turkish Grand National Assembly was constructed, and the gold and silver contributed by Indian Muslims women helped create the reserve for the Turkish Ish Bank. The victory of Turkish nationalist forces led by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, which was celebrated throughout the subcontinent by its Muslim populace, also inspired the Indian Muslim League and its leaders and followers in their struggle for freedom. Indian Muslims saw Turkey’s struggle for independence similar to their own struggle against the colonial British and chauvinistic Hindus. They looked towards Jinnah in the same spirit as they looked towards Ataturk. Both personified the Muslim world’s quest for freedom. Inspired by Ataturk and his vision of modern Turkey, Allama Muhammad Iqbal (Pakistan’s national poet) wrote a series of poems. Two verses from one such poem written in July 1922 are worth-mentioning:

There was a nation through whose wisdom we learned the secrets of destiny

Our origin was just a small spark; He cast a glance at us, and we became Sun, which conquered the world
Allama Iqbal was a spiritual disciple of the great Turkish mystic, Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi. Many of Allama Iqbal’s main works like Asrar-e-Khudi, Rumuz-e-Bekhudi and Javidnama were written with inspiration from Maulana Rumi. Iqbal was a great admirer of Turkey and the Turks, and demonstrated his attachment to them on each and every occasion of suffering and happiness. The history of Muslim rule in the subcontinent is never short of literary personalities influenced by Turkish art and literature. Babar’s Tuzuk-e-Babari was written in Turkish. Turkish verses of Amir Khusro, the fourteenth century poet of Delhi, and the short stories of the nineteenth/twentieth century prose writer Sajjad Haider Yildram about the Turks have continued to charm Indian Muslims over the years. Mirza Ghalib, the most famous Urdu poet of the nineteenth century subcontinent, always took pride in his Turkish origin. The national language of Pakistan, Urdu (from the Turkish word Ordu, meaning army camp), is believed to have originated soon after the Ghaznavid foothold in the Punjab was established and the Turco-Persian Muslims came in contact with the native Indians.

The death of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk on November 10, 1938 was mourned by Muslims throughout the subcontinent. While paying tribute to him, Jinnah said: “His death has come as the greatest blow to the Muslim world...In Kemal Ataturk, the Islamic world has lost a great hero.” Jinnah was greatly inspired by Ataturk’s ideology of Kemalism based essentially on secularism. “You may belong to any religion or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the State...We are all citizens of a state...In the course of the time, Hindus would cease to be Hindus, Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense, as citizens of the State”, said Jinnah in his historic speech at the Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947 in Karachi—three days before the creation of Pakistan. This speech is one of the clearest expositions of a secular State. Jinnah did not live long enough to realize this ideal.

Three important conclusions can be drawn from the history of ties between the Turks and Indian Muslims until the creation of Pakistan. Conclusions that have had a far reaching impact on the nature of relations between Pakistan and Turkey. First, these ties are based on strong ethnic, religious, political and cultural bonds—meaning that Indian Muslims/Pakistanis have historically identified themselves with the Turks. It is an identity not based merely on Muslim nationalism; rather, its scope encompasses a broader cultural phenomenon: Indian Muslims/Pakistanis ethnically and culturally identify themselves with the Turks, since they consider themselves as descendants of the Central Asian Turks. They long considered
Turkey as the center of Muslim power, and, therefore, perceived their own survival in the survival of the Turks. Such a perception continues to exist, even if Turkey has followed a secular path in the last over three quarters of a century. Thus, whenever the Europeans discriminate Turkey, the predominant argument among Muslims of the subcontinent, especially Pakistanis, shows the same traditional resonance: that Europe is doing this only because Turkey is a Muslim country. At the same time, however, Turkey’s ambition to be a part of Europe is also criticized by some subcontinent Muslim writers, who desire Ankara should instead pursue a ‘Look-East’ policy and be more active in Muslim world affairs. Secondly, relations between the Turks and Indian Muslims transcended ideological and political changes in their respective histories—meaning that the Indian Muslim perception of Turkey remained the same, from Ottomans to Ataturk. That is why until the end of the Twentieth Century whether Turkey or Pakistan was ruled by military or civilian regimes, the inherently friendly nature of their ties remained the same. Thirdly, the Ataturk revolution was celebrated in particular by those leaders of the Indian Muslims who led the establishment of Pakistan, including Jinnah and Iqbal—implying that had these leaders lived longer to lead Pakistan in its formative phase, the country might have chosen a political path similar to the one adopted by secular Turkey since 1923.

**THE EVOLUTION OF TIES**

Turkey’s relations with Pakistan since 1947 can be divided into two phases. The first phase, 1947-1990, was more of an idealistic and illusionary nature. During this period, nothing significant was achieved in bilateral trade, commerce and investment between the two countries, although means for bilateral and regional cooperation were institutionalized. They cooperated with each other in political, cultural and security areas. Both joined the US-sponsored anti-communist alliance system, which also served their respective security interests. It is during the second phase of Turkish-Pakistan relationship, from 1990 until present, that the two countries have shown realistic tendencies in fostering mutual relationship.

**Phase I: 1947-1990; From Illusion to Reality**

The first phase of Turkish-Pakistan relationship was limited to fostering cultural links, exchanging visits of top leaders and high officials, expressing solidarity and support for each other’s vital causes (Kashmir and Cyprus) at international forums. However, credible foundations for future economic, trade and commercial relations were indeed laid down during this period. It was within the
ambit of multilateral cooperation that Turkey and Pakistan shared their security and economic policy pursuits by joining the US Baghdad Pact/Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and establishing the organization for Regional Cooperation and Development (RCD), respectively. Until 1990, the only instance where Turkey raised its concern with the Pakistani leadership was when former Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was hanged in April 1979. Suleyman Demirel, the then Turkish prime minister, had advised General Ziaul Haq not to hang Mr Bhutto. The 1989 decision by former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to re-join the British Commonwealth and consequently recognizing the 'Republic of Cyprus' might have annoyed Turkey, but no public record is available to prove whether Ankara expressed its annoyance with Pakistani authorities on the matter.

After the establishment of Pakistan, one area of foreign policy that Jinnah particularly stressed to explore was consolidating the country’s ties with the Muslim world. Naturally, Turkey, with whom Indian Muslims had enjoyed deep-rooted ties spanning centuries, emerged as a priority in external relations of the country soon after its birth. Both Ataturk and Ismet Inonu had hailed the Indian Muslim struggle for freedom, and the emergence of Pakistan as an independent country was celebrated by the Turks. Mian Bashir Ahmad, a well-respected Muslim League leader and scholar, was posted as Pakistan’s first ambassador to Turkey, and an equally towering Turkish personality Yahya Kemal Bayatli was appointed as Turkey’s first ambassador to Pakistan.

It was in the 1950s that the two countries started exchanging visits of their leaders, strengthening their cultural, religious and educational contacts, and entering bilateral and multilateral arrangements for regional peace and security. Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad visited Turkey in November 1953, President Celal Bayar visited Pakistan in February 1955. Prime Minister Adnan Menderes visited Pakistan in March 1956, and the same year in July President Iskander Mirza visited Turkey. In July 1951, the two countries signed a Treaty of Friendship, and, as its follow-up, an Agreement for Friendly Cooperation was concluded in April 1954. The two agreements were a forerunner to the Baghdad Pact (April 1955), concluded by Turkey, Pakistan, Britain, Iraq and Iran.

Ever since independence, Pakistan had become a Cold War ally of the United States. It had chosen to be so in the wake of increasing security threat from India. The two countries had already fought a limited battle over Kashmir. Since Turkey was also an ally of the United States, it shared regional security perceptions with Pakistan—and, thus, together, the two countries joined the Baghdad Pact. Moreover, given its historical religious, cultural and political ties with Muslims of
the subcontinent, which further strengthened after the birth of Pakistan, it was but natural for Turkey to support Pakistan's case for Kashmir. The Pakistani leadership equally defended the cause of Turkey in Cyprus. In 1959, Baghdad Pact was renamed as CENTO, following the formal withdrawal of Iraq from it that year. With its headquarters in Ankara, the CENTO continued to function until the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which caused its collapse.

That Turkey and Pakistan opted to serve US containment policy and joined the system of defense alliances built under this policy to thwart Soviet Communist expansion during the heyday of the Cold War period, helped them achieve credible defense cooperation between them. By joining these alliances, the two countries maintained the same vision of regional and international security during the Cold War period and supported each other's vital national security interests. In early 1964, the Pakistan Red Crescent Association provided the first ever supply of life sustaining goods to the Turkish Cypriots who were under armed assault by Greek Cypriot militant forces since December 1963. Turkey provided both material and moral help to Pakistan during its 1965 War with India. Colonel Muzaffar Akin, head of the Turkish Red Crescent Association, led a delegation of Turkish nurses with necessary medical supplies to treat the war casualties. Since the cause of war again was the Kashmir dispute, both Turkish government and media supported Pakistan's stance on Kashmir during the war and its aftermath at international forums. More important than the multi-level security and defense dimension of their relationship, in which the two countries laid the foundations of a long-lasting cooperation and collaboration, the 1960s laid the essential groundwork for regional economic cooperation among Turkey, Pakistan and Iran.

For the purpose, on the initiative of President Ayub Khan, a trilateral summit was held in Istanbul in July 1964, in which, besides President Ayub, President Cemal Gursel and Shahanshah Muhammad Reza Shah Pehlavi participated. The summit established the Regional Development and Cooperation (RCD) Organization, and an array of organizational structures within in, including nine Working Groups on all the important areas of joint economic cooperation and a Regional Planning Commission to coordinate the activities of these Working Groups. So speedy was the performance in some areas that credible results were yielded within a short span of time. For instance, the Working Group on Posts, Telegraphs and Tele-communications was able to reduce by 1965 the postal, telegraph and telephone charges among RCD member-states by 50 to 80 per cent. In Istanbul, a Joint Shipping Service was established, which, by 1969, started a regular cargo service among the member-states. To foster trade and commerce, a Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industries was set up, and, to increase cultural
cooperation, a Cultural Research Center was established in Tehran. Visa restrictions among member-countries were abolished. By 1969, the three countries were linked by road. Bilaterally, Turkey and Pakistan came further closer with the visit to Pakistan by President Cevdet Sunay in October 1966 and Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel in April 1967. Even though RCD had achieved much in terms of setting a firm basis for future regional economic cooperation, the achievements in the field of trade and commerce between Pakistan and Turkey during the 1960s remained less than significant, a trend that continued until the end of the 1980s.

Coincidentally, the 1970s were marked by political turmoil, including civil-military struggle for power, in both Turkey and Pakistan. However, it did not impact their relations, as the respective leaders continued to show due interest in maintaining the traditional cooperative spirit and supporting each other's vital national security interests. Whichever course Pakistan opted for Kashmir settlement, including the 1972 Simla Accord on Kashmir between India and Pakistan, Turkey supported it. When in July 1974 Turkey intervened in Cyprus to prevent the extermination of Turkish Cypriots by Greek Cypriot military junta, Prime Minister Bhutto offered Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit to send Pakistan Air Force aircraft.

While Turkey and Pakistan continued to coordinate their regional security activities under CENTO until its demise in 1979 and foster bilateral defense, political and cultural ties, their foremost achievement in the field of mutual economic cooperation during the 1970s was the creation in 1977 of a Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC), which since then has met periodically and been engaged in expanding cooperation in industrial and technological fields, exchanging information on export processing zone, electronics, shipping, shipbuilding and repairs, telecommunication, agriculture, petrochemicals, civil aviation and automobile. Whatever little cooperation that the two countries have so far achieved in the above fields has resulted from the various measures adopted and agreements concluded during successive sessions of the JMC. The JMC's creation was a follow-up to the mutual understanding reached between the two sides during the visit to Pakistan by President Fahri Koruturk in November 1975. However, it must be stated that such achievements remained minimal until the end of the 1980s, a decade during which the bilateral relations between the countries, just like most of the previous times, were primarily marked by mutual gestures of traditional goodwill without achieving anything concrete in the fields of trade, commerce and other areas of economic cooperation.
The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan brought the United States and Pakistan closer, and Turkey, being a key US ally, supported the Afghan Mujahideen war against Soviet forces. When in 1983 Turkish Cypriot leader declared independence and announced the establishment of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the Pakistani authorities did convey their interest to the Turkish leadership in recognizing the new Turkish Cypriot Republic and Pakistan's Permanent Representative at the UN forcefully argued the Turkish Cypriot case at the Security Council. The 1980s also witnessed a personal level friendship between Generals Ziaul Haq and Kenan Evren, who alone visited Pakistan four times. Both leaders concluded various agreements aimed at consolidating mutual cooperation in various fields. The policy of free-market reforms pursued by former President and Prime Minister Turgut Ozal, who visited Pakistan in 1984, served as a lesson for Pakistan, which has sought the same course since the start of the 1990s, even though without any sound results.

During President Evren's visit to Pakistan in February 1989, several agreements were signed, including a Maritime Shipping Agreement and a Bilateral Agreement on Tourism Cooperation. In May 1989, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto visited Turkey, and signed agreements on Cultural Exchange Program for the years 1989-1992 and Scientific and Technological Cooperation for the year 1989-1990. An important event of cultural importance was the June 1987 celebration of 'Pakistan Week' in Istanbul. It was also during the 1980s that the magnificent Faisal Mosque, also housing the International Islamic University, in the foothills of Islamabad's Margalla Hills was completed. It was designed by Veulat Dalokay, the late Turkish architect and former Mayor of Ankara. It was also during the 1980s that Turkish actress Nazan Sanci became a superstar of the Pakistani cinema, and the trend of Urdu film shootings in Turkey began—a process reaching its climax in the 1990s, resulting in the production of many popular Urdu and Punjabi film hits, including Miss Istanbul.

As for progress on the economic front, by the end of the 1980s, the JMC had met several times. Its seventh session held in 1988 in Islamabad agreed to expand mutual trade, while recognizing that the biggest hurdle in the way was the serious lack of direct shipping link. Thus, the signing in May 1989 of a Maritime Shipping Agreement was a headway, and it helped increased, even though marginally, the volume of trade built around the export of leather, cotton and rice. In order to boost trade, the two countries extended to each other revolving credits of $50 million for a specified period. For the same purpose, an Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation was signed in 1985. In addition to the maritime shipping cooperation, the two countries signed an Agreement on Agricultural Cooperation in 1983, and, in
one of the JMC sessions during the decade, lists were exchanged for further cooperation in wildlife, fisheries and on-farm water management.\(^1\)

The collaboration in defense production and professional military training was another area that became the focus of attention of Presidents Ziaul Haq and Kenan Evren during the 1980s. An institutional framework for fostering defense cooperation between the two countries, the Defense Consultative Group (DCG) was set up, and frequent exchange of visits between the top military officials, including chiefs of air-force, navy and army, became a usual affair—a trend which has continued over time. It was also during the 1980s that the parliamentarians of the two countries began to interact with each other closely. In 1985, a Turco-Pakistan Friendship Group was formed in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey; and Pakistan National Assembly reciprocated by establishing a similar group later that decade. A parliamentary delegation from Pakistan visited Turkey in March 1987.\(^2\)

During 1947-1990, particularly in the 1980s, the bilateral and multilateral collaboration between Turkey and Pakistan laid the necessary groundwork for the beginning of a realistic relationship between the two countries in the political, economic, defense and cultural spheres in the 1990s and beyond. A relationship which is not merely based on idealistic notions of the centuries-old past, as was the case during over 900 years of pre-partition period or during over four decades after the creation of Pakistan.

**Phase II: 1990-Present; Beginning of a Realistic Relationship**

With the end of the Cold War, Turkey emerged as a principal regional player at the start of the 1990s. The free-market reforms beginning in the mid-1980s and sustained ever since introduced a dynamic spirit of entrepreneurship in the private business sector which was ready to invest in foreign lands. The Turkish government, showing a spirit of openness, was willing to assist it in doing so. The Muslim regions of Central Asia and Caucasus, liberated from the Communist rule following the Soviet demise, emerged as a priority area for private Turkish investment. The centuries-old cultural, political, religious and ethnic ties with the people of six Muslim Central Asian republics was the single most important factor in determining Turkey’s and its businessmen’s quest for investing their capital in primarily the construction and oil exploration sectors and fostering trade dealings with their counterparts in these republics. With the passage of time, the sphere of this investment and trade was extended to the Russian Federation, and, by 1998, the private and public investment of Turkey in Central Asia was well over $6 billion; in Russia, it was nearly $7 billion.\(^1\) The very factor that encouraged the Big Business in Turkey to capitalize on the historic opening in Central Asia convinced a section
of the Turkish business community about investing in the infrastructure development of Pakistan, where, again given the historical nature of ties between the two countries, it was but natural for the potential Turkish investors to expect a conducive and friendly climate.

Thus began a series of private Turkish investment ventures in Pakistan, involving three construction companies, M/s Bayinder, STFA and Tekser, which are engaged in building the country’s infrastructure and communication network, including the construction of major roads, a motorway, harbor and canal projects. The total volume of private Turkish investment currently stands at around $1.5 billion.22

The highlight of the private Turkish investment in the 1990s until present is the M/s Bayinder’s $644 million (Rs 24.524 billion) Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway Project, which will complete in 2002 and be a four-lane super highway, 154 km long. Unfortunately, the Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway Project has faced difficulties ever since the contract for it was awarded to M/s Bayinder in March 1993 by the then government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. This has happened due to Pakistan’s consistent political and economic instability as well as the inability on the part of the Turkish company to meet its financial commitments and construction deadlines. In January 1994, the government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto terminated the project for political reasons—for which the country had to pay the price: the project was revived in July 1997 at a greater cost than the original cost of over Rs 16 billion in March 1993. 23

Under the contract, Bayinder was to bear 40 per cent of the cost in the form of foreign currency loan, for which the government of Pakistan extended sovereign guarantees to the contractor. For its part, the government had to pay the rest of the 60 per cent of the cost, but only two years after the start of the project. In 1999, the Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway Project once again ran into trouble. The Nawaz Sharif government tried to solve the problem until the end. The differences between Pakistan’s National Highway Authority (NHA) and Bayinder reached their peak in January 2000, when the latter decided to abandon the project. NHA officials claimed that the government of Pakistan had paid as mobilization advance Rs 8 billion to Bayinder—including Rs 636 million in September 1993, Rs 2-5 billion in July 1999, in addition to $ 2 million for purchasing the necessary machinery—and, despite that, Bayinder was able to complete work costing only Rs 1.5 billion, one billion of which the company owed to local contractors whom it had subcontracted the construction work. In addition, NHA officials claimed that since the revival of the contract, Bayinder had arranged only about $100 million, even though, under the revived contract, it was required to arrange about $322 million. The military
government of Pakistan also wanted to reduce the initially agreed six-lanes project to four-lanes.\textsuperscript{24}

For its part, Bayinder informed the government of Pakistan in October 1999 that it was facing difficulty in securing the foreign currency loan due to downward sliding in Pakistan’s credit rating since the nuclear tests of May 1998. As a result, the Exim Bank of Turkey, from which Bayinder wanted to secure the said loan, had imposed strict conditions, including a high interest rate, no grace period for the repayment of loan, and the sanction of only $48 million as initial loan, with the rest linked to matching payments to Bayinder by the government of Pakistan. Bayinder also demanded an extension in the original deadline for the project’s completion, May 2001, to the year 2002. In April 2000, the project was reportedly reactivated as the two sides reached a compromise agreement. The project was limited to four-lanes, and its completion deadline was extended to 2002. The Turkish company also informed the government of Pakistan that it will secure the remaining foreign currency loan from a syndicate of Turkish banks.\textsuperscript{25} However, with a history of ups and downs, the Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway project may face some more hurdles before its completion. On Pakistan’s part, it is asking too much from a foreign firm to pay for the country’s internal economic instability arising primarily out of its political instability. Had the political power in the country not changed hands so frequently, as it did throughout the 1990s, Bayinder might have completed the project at the original cost. For its part, the Turkish firm has to fully meet all the financial obligations (including payments to local contractors) and deadlines of the construction work, as emphasized in the revived contract for the project.

Bayinder’s case is an exception. But, as far as two other Turkish private construction companies are concerned, they have not faced any big hurdle in completing their projects. The second biggest private Turkish investment is by the STFA (Sezai-Turkes-Fevzi Akkaya) construction company, with a total capital commitment of $597 million. By 1998, it had completed five projects, including the $138 million Jinnah Naval Complex, $100 million Lahore Bypass Project, $42 million Indus Highway Project, $6 million Ormara Water Supply Project, and $5 million Ormara Submarine Rebuild Project. By then, it had completed 80 per cent of the work on the second phase of the $45 million Indus Highway. By 1998, the company was expecting to start work on two other projects, including the $590 million Karachi Light Weight Mass Transit Project (to be built by a consortium of construction companies with STFA having a share of $100 million) and the $73 million Pehur High Level Canal Tunnels Project. For its part, Tekser, the third largest private Turkish in Pakistan, had in 1998 resumed work on its only project, the Chashma Right Bank Canal Project, which was inaugurated by Turkish state
minister and co-chairman JMC Abdulhaluk Cay during his visit to Pakistan in April 2000.26

As far as bilateral trade between Turkey and Pakistan is concerned, it has increased since 1990, as compared to dismal levels of the past over four decades. However, this increase is less than satisfactory. In fact, rather than showing any consistent growth, the bilateral trade volume has fluctuated on a yearly basis. For instance, taking into account the first half of the 1990s, in 1990, it was $130 million; 1991, $121 million; 1992, $87 million; 1993, $159 million; 1994, $88 million; 1995, $250 million. The reason why it had suddenly reached $250 million in 1995 was the import of Turkish Personal Armour Carriers (PACs) by Pakistan that year. Since 1990, two important initiatives have been taken to enhance bilateral trade between the two countries. Firstly, in 1995, a Joint Business Council was created between the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries and the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey to bring the two countries’ businessmen together. As a follow-up, the second essential step in the area was taken in the 1998 session of the JMC with the establishment of a Joint Marketing Company to undertake joint business and investment ventures in the Persian Gulf and Central Asia. In April 1998, a Turkish maritime delegation visited Islamabad to discuss and resolve the long-standing maritime shipping impediment to sea-borne trade. Then, in July 1998, a Pakistani trade delegation led by former Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited Turkey. During the visit, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Turkish Association of Contractors. An industrial and trade festival was also organized by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries in Istanbul in the spring of 1999.27 In the 1990s, the exchange of parliamentary delegations also continued, including a visit to Pakistan by a Turkish parliamentary delegation in January 1990, the visit to Turkey by Pakistan’s Senate Chairman and Speaker of the National Assembly in April 1990 and January 1991, respectively.

During the 1990s, the long-upheld tradition of exchange of official and unofficial visits by heads of state and government between Turkey and Pakistan gained momentum. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto visited Turkey in February 1990; President Farooq Leghari, in September 1994. President Demirel (with a 150-member delegation, including businessmen) visited Islamabad in March 1995 to attend the third ECO summit. In 1996, Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan came to Pakistan. This was followed by President Demirel’s two visits to Pakistan in 1997, first in March to participate in the extraordinary session of the Organization of Islamic Countries’ (OIC) summit in Islamabad which was held to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Pakistan’s Independence and second in November 1997, during which he and Prime Minister Sharif jointly inaugurated the Islamabad-Peshawar
Motorway Project. In June 1997, Prime Minister Sharif visited Istanbul to participate in the summit of eight Muslim countries, which established the Developing Eight (D-8) organization for economic cooperation. He paid a solidarity visit to Turkey in August 1999 when Marmara earthquake disaster hit the country. For General Pervez Musharraf, Turkey was one of the three Muslim countries he chose to visit within a month after taking over power in October 1999.

During the 1990s, Turkey and Pakistan also collaborated closely on defense matters, even though without achieving any credible results. The successive sessions of DCG have particularly stressed to explore collaboration in defense production. For the purpose, in 1996, a joint defense workshop, participated by private and public defense manufacturers of the two countries, short-listed areas of cooperation. The DCG sessions have also helped increase participation of the military forces of the two countries in professional training programs. Ever since Pakistan acquired 60 F-16 aircraft from the United States in the mid-1980s, Turkish air-force pilots and engineers have been training their counterparts in the PAF. On 6 September 1997, F-16s of the Turkish Air Force participated in an air show in Islamabad held to mark the country’s Defense Day celebrations. In the late 1990s, the exchange of top military officials between the two countries has gained momentum. Turkish Chief of General Staff General Ismail Hakki Karadayi visited Pakistan in December 1996. The Turkish Chief of Naval Staff followed him in July 1997. Former Pakistan Army Chief General Jehangir Karamat visited Turkey in February 1998, and the same year Turkish Air Chief General Ilhan Kilic visited Islamabad. The frequent exchange of visits by top military officials and delegations between Turkey and Pakistan remains a continuing feature of their relationship.28

During the 1990s, the cultural and educational level cooperation also showed traditional consistency. In September 1990, a Pakistani cultural troupe performed in Turkey’s major cities. In October 1992, an exhibition of Turkish arts and crafts was held at the Lok Versa Museum in Islamabad. In March 1997, the popular Turkish Mehter band enthralled the audience in Pakistan’s major cities. The following year, in November, a fashion show by Pakistani designer Shaamyyel and an exhibition of sculptures and ornaments of artist Amin Gulgee was organized in Ankara. This was followed by a music concert by Vital Signs, a leading Pakistani pop band, in Ankara, which reportedly thrilled the young Turkish souls. On the tourism front, the only development since 1990 has been the signing in February 1990 of the Protocol on Tourism, during Prime Minister Bhutto’s visit to Turkey that year. The agreement was a follow-up to the 1989 agreement between the two countries on cooperation in tourism. However, the two countries have done little to implement these agreements.29
As far as progress in the educational field is concerned, the Chairs on Pakistan Studies and Urdu at Ankara University and Istanbul University, respectively, have produced hundreds of Turkish graduates over the years. A Turkish Language Department at the National Institute of Modern Languages in Islamabad has been in existence for over two decades, offering language courses to both civilian and military students. Since the early 1990s, Ankara has a highly acclaimed elementary school run by the Pakistani management. A similar school is being run by the Turkish management in Islamabad. In each country, the high honor students are awarded scholarship to receive university education in the other. Since 1990, there has also been a growing trend among Pakistani students to pursue their higher studies at the universities in Turkey and the TRNC. The Middle East Technical University in Ankara and the Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) in the TRNC top the list insofar as the Pakistani student enrollment in Turkish and Turkish Cypriot universities is concerned. At the EMU alone, the number of Pakistani students is nearly 300. In recent years, the TRNC government has also offered scholarships to Pakistani students to study at the EMU.

Since 1990, Pakistan and Turkey have used various multilateral forums to further their mutual interests. At the United Nations, they coordinated their activities on the issues of Bosnia, Kosovo, Kashmir, Cyprus and Chechnya. In January 1994, prime ministers Tansu Ciller and Benazir Bhutto visited Bosnia-Herzegovina to express solidarity with the Bosnian Muslims. The two countries also led OIC’s Contact Groups on Kashmir, Bosnia and Kosovo, and have been active participants in the Muslim world organization’s summit sessions, foreign ministers’ conferences as well as its Committee on Science and Technology (COMSTECH). As for the OIC’s practical utility for the two countries, it has been nothing more than a forum for expressing solidarity for Muslim world causes by OIC member-states. Ever since the December 1997 summit session of the OIC, Turkey in particular has been less enthusiastic about its activities for three reasons. First, because at the said summit session, a number of Muslim countries, especially Iran, had bitterly criticized Turkey for pursuing defense cooperation with Israel; second, probably due to OIC’s refusal to increase the Turkish Cypriot status in the organization from the current Observer level to that of a Full Member; and, third, Ankara’s failure, despite extensive lobbying, to secure the post of OIC Secretary-General at the June 2000 OIC foreign ministers’ conference in Kuala Lumpur.

For Turkey and Pakistan, D-8 is another multilateral forum to promote their mutual interests. Besides them, its membership includes six other Muslim countries: Iran, Egypt, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Proposed in late 1995 by former Prime Minister Erbakan, and a dream child of his personal vision for an effective Muslim world alliance with a limited number of countries
(unlike the OIC, with 56 members), D-8 was formally established in June 1997 at the Istanbul summit among the leaders of the eight Muslim countries. The summit identified six priority projects, covering various areas of economic cooperation. The second D-8 summit was held in 1998 in Bangladesh. D-8 has not made any substantive progress due to two reasons. First, member-countries of the D-8 hail from regions separated by long distances; and, secondly, some of these countries’ priorities for regional cooperation lie elsewhere (for instance, that of Malaysia and Indonesia in ASEAN, the Association of South East Asian Nations).

Since 1990, the only regional organization that has helped Pakistan and Turkey to serve their mutual ends and relate these to other Muslim countries of the region has been the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)—a successor to the RCD, which lost its practicality due to the 1979 Iranian revolution. The ECO’s creation, and later expansion, was necessitated by the global trend towards regionalism in the 1980s and 1990s. Initially, it had the same three members as RCD did—Iran, Turkey and Pakistan. But after the Soviet collapse and the consequent independence of the Muslim Central Asian region, ECO membership was extended to seven other states of Central Asian and West Asian region, including Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The ECO became operational in 1991 following ratification of the amended Treaty of Izmir, although it was formally declared in November 1992. The ECO meetings held the following year produced the Quetta Plan of Action, Istanbul Declaration and Almaty Plan. all of which identified the following three priorities for the organization: development of transport and communications infrastructure; facilitation of trade and investment; and effective use of the vast energy resources. To achieve progress in the priority areas, the third ECO summit held in Islamabad in March 1995 established six institutions, including: a Trade and Development Bank, a Reinsurance Company, a Shipping Company, an ECO Airline, a Cultural Institute and a Science Foundation. The summit also concluded a Transit Trade Agreement and an Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of ECO countries, which have entered into force. The May 1997 Ashgabat summit of the ECO produced a Declaration on the Development of Transport and Communications Infrastructure and Network of Transnational Pipelines in the ECO region. In addition, the eighth ECO Council of Ministers meeting held in 1998 signed a Charter of ECO Education Institute to be established in Turkey; a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation Against Smuggling and Customs Frauds; and the main text of the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement. As for trade and commercial cooperation, a Memorandum of Understanding was concluded in 1992, establishing
a Preferential Tariff Arrangement between Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. It provides for 10 per cent reduction in tariffs on a list of specific items.\textsuperscript{31}

In April 2000, the third ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communications was held in Islamabad. It pledged for maximum economic cooperation in the field of transport and communication infrastructure. While calling for an early establishment of common postal areas and an enhanced cooperation in the development of telecommunication equipment industry, the meeting suggested putting into operation the Trans-Asia-Europe Fiber Optical Cable System in the ECO region. The meeting also established a Permanent Commission on Transport and Communication. The Islamabad ministerial moot of the ECO was followed by the sixth summit of ECO leaders on 10 June 2000 in Tehran, which called for implementation of the 1997 Ashgabat Declaration and the 10th Regional Planning Council meeting’s report of February 2000 on oil and gas pipeline routes and on ensuring a meaningful development in economic cooperation and providing the landlocked oil and gas producing ECO member countries with access to the world energy markets. The summit declaration expressed satisfaction over the setting up of a high-level experts group on ECO oil and gas pipeline route(s) and its success in preparation of terms of reference (TOR). The TOR relates to a study to determine economically viable and environmentally safe ECO oil and gas pipeline route(s) by taking into consideration the already existing new agreements between some ECO member countries and non-member countries.\textsuperscript{32}

Since the formal launching of the ECO in November 1992, the pace of cooperation among ECO countries has not been up to the mark. The ECO covers a vast region and a population of 600 million. It has tremendous natural resources, and proficient manpower. Still progress so far achieved under ECO in important areas of cooperation, particularly in developing communication linkages, suggests the existence of a great deal of rhetoric rather than action. There are four main reasons for the failure of ECO to achieve substantive progress in realizing the ambitious goals which are set at every ECO summit meeting. The first reason is the consistent political instability in some of the ECO members, particularly in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The vast, untapped gas and oil reserves in some Central Asian countries like Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan cannot be a source of regional prosperity unless there is peace in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Secondly, most of ECO members belong to Central Asia and to a large extent the Central Asian states face a paradoxical situation: whether to forge their links southward or to retain their ties with Russia? For the Central Asian states, the options for external cooperation are wide and diversified in the sense that countries like China and the United States are anxious to strengthen their influence in these states. The European Union, particularly Germany, also want to show their presence in Central Asia. Because of
this situation, the Central Asian countries have not been able to seriously work out their role in ECO. Thirdly, while many members of ECO are rich in mineral resources, their main problem is the availability of financial capital. The problem is acute in the case of Central Asian republics. Even Iran, Pakistan and Turkey are economically not in a position to play a leading role in funding various projects identified at the various ministerial meetings and summits of ECO. Finally, the contradictions in the prevailing trends of nationalism, religion, modernism and secularism in the ECO region also pose a great challenge to cooperation within the framework of ECO. For instance, all the Central Asian countries overtly condemn the wave of religious extremism unleashed from Afghanistan and consider it a serious threat to regional peace and security.35

However, insofar as ECO’s relevance to the mutually compatible foreign policy goals of Turkey and Pakistan is concerned, the organization remains the only hope for the two countries to complement their bilateral agendas for closer relationship in all areas of cooperation within a regional setting. Iran is fast experiencing a transition towards external openness and domestic reform. The over two decades of revolutionary experience has resulted in regional isolation of the country and the denial of freedom to its people. As the reformist forces in Iran strengthen their political clout, the country should be expected to be a more motivated partner in ECO, as was the case with the pre-revolutionary Iran’s highly cooperative partnership in the RCD. While Turkey and Pakistan should take the lead in revitalizing the ECO agendas for action in the three crucial areas of trade, communication and energy, they should also try to incorporate Iran in the process. How to benefit from the capital-deficient but resource-rich Central Asia is a question that can be pragmatically addressed and answered through trilateral cooperative initiatives within the ECO framework by the three founding members and bigger states of the organization: Iran, Turkey and Pakistan.

TRENDS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

While the end of the Cold War has led to Turkey’s regional political and economic assertion, it has brought tremendous difficulties for Pakistan on both internal and external fronts. While Turkey is engaged in undertaking crucial political, economic and social reforms to become a full member of the European Union (EU), Pakistan is faced with an uncertain political future after the October 1999 military coup. While Turkey has established itself as a high-income country, Pakistan’s economy is in a dismal condition. While Turkey has achieved considerable success in checking anti-state ethnic and religious forces, Pakistan is
angered by the rise of Islamic extremism, fuelled by the Taliban rule in Afghanistan and Muslim militancy in Kashmir. Pakistan’s inability to de-link itself from the forces fuelling Islamic extremism within and outside its frontiers has caused serious implications for the country’s relationship with Turkey. Until the end of the last century, despite following two different political ideologies, the leaders of Turkey and Pakistan had not let any diverging factor mar the two nations’ traditionally friendly ties. But in the new century, it is increasingly becoming obvious that the pursuance of two fundamentally different ideological courses by the two countries might eventually push them into two opposing camps—unless their leaders understand the peculiar circumstances currently facing each of the two nations in its respective geo-political setting, and initiate a full-fledged movement towards capitalizing their tremendous potential in all areas of mutual benefit, particularly trade, commerce and investment.

Convergence of Perceptions and Interests

Turkey has been one of the friendly regional states that Pakistan has collaborated with closely during the post-Cold War period. Yet the achievements that the two countries have made during the period, especially in the sphere of mutual trade and commerce as well as defense production, remain insufficient; rather, negligible. They do not match the historically deep attachment and relationship between the two nations. The only sphere where the two countries can claim to have made real progress is the private Turkish investment in Pakistan. Despite the creation of a Joint Business Council and a Joint Marketing Company, Pakistani and Turkish businessmen have not been forthcoming in starting the joint business and investment ventures in the regional markets. In fact, if such a course is realized, Pakistan can achieve its long-desired aim of reaching the Muslim Central Asia via Turkey, an ambition not materialized so far due to the continued war in Afghanistan. Turkey’s capital and Pakistan’s skilled manpower make an excellent combination for joint business and investment ventures in the Persian Gulf and Central Asia.

As far as mutual trade is concerned, the perception of officials in each country is that its current volume is too less. For instance, Foreign Minister Ismail Cem, during his April 1998 visit to Islamabad, remarked, “The total trade volume of the two countries with the rest of the world is some $100 billion. Unfortunately, the annual trade volume between them is just $150 million, which is very small as compared to their total world trade figure and the very close political ties that the two countries enjoy.” One reason for the low level of mutual trade is the existence of parallel economies in the two countries. Both countries trade in products such as
cotton, rice, leather and textiles. That their target markets are the same, however, does not mean they should not look for other layers of cooperation in trade and commerce. Among other goods, Pakistan imports wheat from Turkey, and the latter imports rice and textiles from it. For its part, Pakistan can import dairy products, durable items such as refrigerators, washing machines, other electronic goods, and automobiles from Turkey—which are said to be qualitatively better and far cheaper than Western, Japanese or South Korean products. Turkey can import dry fruit and handicrafts from Pakistan, in addition to rice, cotton and textiles. The economists from Pakistan and Turkey can identify more of such products which the trading communities of the two countries can find profitable as exports.

Despite various bilateral and regional efforts to achieve a direct maritime shipping link between Turkey and Pakistan, the handicap of transportation remains intact to a great extent. Air transport is costly and limited. An encouraging development in this context reportedly is the recent growth in trade among ECO countries through the ECO Shipping Company. If Pakistan and Turkey find it hard to increase the sea-borne trade through bilateral means, the ECO shipping Company is the best alternative to expand mutual trade. As for investment, the private Turkish investors in Pakistan can diversify their endeavors by investing in sectors other than construction, such as those of energy and agro-based industries. Lastly and more importantly, the private business in Turkey needs to set its priorities right. Presently, it maintains a Euro-centric outlook. For the private business interests in Turkey, there exist tremendous opportunities to introduce their products in big consumer markets such as that of Pakistan with a population of over 140 million. Currently, Japan, China, South Korea and Western countries monopolize such markets. In Pakistan, where the present military government is trying to prevent the smuggling of foreign goods, Turkish companies like Archelek can market their durable goods such as washing machines, television sets, vacuum cleaners, etc. One sees no reason why a Pakistani consumer will prefer any durable product other than Turkish if it is qualitatively equal or even superior to a similar product from Japan or South Korea.34

As for joint ventures in defense production, various areas have already been identified by successive sessions of the DCG and the 1994 Joint Defense Workshop. Pakistan’s Wah Ordnance Factories specializes in the production of quality light weaponry. Turkey is far ahead of Pakistan in the field of defense production, Yet it is possible for the two countries to pool their resources and technical skill and export arms to third countries.35 Tourism is another unexplored area in which Pakistan, with the scenic beauty and grandeur of its northern areas, having some of the highest peaks of the world, including the second highest K-2,
can learn valid lessons from Turkey’s tremendous success in the tourism industry. An agreement and a protocol on tourism cooperation already exist. What is needed is to actually implement the measures specified by them. The two countries’ national airlines can offer special airfare packages for the respective tourists. This step will go a long way in complementing the existing cultural ties between the two brotherly nations. Enhanced cultural links are always a key to the promotion of economic and commercial cooperation.

The urgent need for undertaking such crucial bilateral measures aside, Pakistan and Turkey should continue to strive for building a community of common regional interests, as this will positively impact their own mutual ties. The ECO, currently headed by Önder Ozar as its Secretary General, is the best forum for the purpose. The two countries should, in particular, try to make amends with Iran, ignoring the problems its revolutionary leadership has caused them since 1979. In the context of Pakistan-Iran relations, the recent conclusion of a gas pipeline agreement between the two countries is a landmark development. The planned gas pipeline will pass through Pakistani territory and supply natural gas to the energy-starved India. For its part, in dire need of financial capital, Iran has long searched for land and sea outlets for the export of its natural gas. In 1996, during his visit to Iran, former Turkish premier Erbakan had also concluded a multi-billion dollar gas pipeline project with his Iranian counterpart. Turkey itself is faced with the shortage of energy resources, including natural gas. Of course, the Baku-Ceyhan gas pipeline project will also meet Turkey’s own energy needs, but it is in Ankara’s interest to exploit all possible options, including the said gas pipeline project with Iran. As for Pakistan, once the agreed pipeline project is implemented and Iranian natural gas supply to Iran starts through Pakistani territory, the country will reportedly earn over $600 million annually as a royalty. This will boost the country’s economy and strengthen regional linkages among the three countries. It is the community of interests built around economic cooperation which brings the conflicting nations together, thereby ensuring a long-lasting regional peace and stability. Given that, the regional outlook of Turkey and Pakistan should be based on a forward-looking approach rather than remaining a victim of past bitterness in their respective experiences with Iran and India.

In various areas of mutual and regional cooperation between Turkey and Pakistan, there exists vast potential which has not yet been fully explored. In the promotion of trade, investment, business, defense production, tourism, and cultural activities, there exists complete harmony and convergence in the perceptions and interests of Turkey and Pakistan. It is about time leadership of the two countries
strove hard to achieve credible results in all of these areas or bilateral cooperation. Achieving mutually compatible ends through regional cooperation, particularly within the framework of the ECO, should be another priority.

Divergence of Perceptions and Interests

Since the start of the last decade, there have been areas where divergence of perceptions and interests has emerged between Turkey and Pakistan, even if the two sides prefer not to express it officially in clear terms. While Pakistani and Turkish leaders continue to express in public the same rhetorical proclamations of traditional goodwill and friendship, the relationship between the two countries is increasingly being haunted by some obvious irritants, with serious implications for the future.

The first area of divergence between Turkey and Pakistan is Afghanistan. Since Turkey has economic and political stakes in Central Asia, it does not like the growing influence of Taliban in Afghanistan—which can cause a spillover of Islamic extremism into the Central Asian region. That is why Turkey and its Central Asian partners as well as Russia support the anti-Taliban alliance in northern Afghanistan. Uzbek leader Rashid Dostum, after being ditched by General Abdul Malik from his own faction Jumbish-e-Milli in June 1997, had taken refuge in Istanbul. His Tajik partner in the northern alliance against Taliban, Commander Ahmad Shah Masood, visited Ankara in April 1998. Turkey recognizes the government of Burhanuddin Rabbani as the only legitimate representative of Afghanistan, a government that came to an end with the 1996 capture of Kabul by Taliban. Ankara wants a broad-based settlement in Afghanistan, which should include all ethnic factions. As Foreign Minister Ismail Cem observed during his visit to Islamabad in April 1998: “We want all sides to get together and form a transitional government consisting of all ethnic groups in order to create conditions which are conducive for a broad-based settlement of the issue.” For the purpose, during the visit, he proposed to the government of Pakistan the idea of holding an all-Afghan parties conference in Istanbul under the UN framework—which has not yet taken place, while the warring sides continue to fight in Afghanistan.37

Pakistan’s perceptions regarding Afghanistan are altogether different from Turkey’s. Islamabad recognizes the Taliban government in Kabul as the only legitimate authority. Even though officially Pakistan also calls for the inclusion in the Afghan government of other faction leaders, its role in creating and sustaining Taliban rule in Afghanistan cannot be underestimated. Pakistan’s backing of Taliban has caused more harm to the country than bringing any concrete benefits.
Perhaps the greatest loss for Pakistan’s backing of Taliban is that the Turkmen-
Pakistan gas pipeline project has been put on hold. The government of former
premier Sharif, which had signed an agreement on the project with Turkmenistan in
1997, was banking on stability in Afghanistan resulting from the Taliban hold over
Afghanistan, including the territory through which the pipeline had to pass. First,
Afghanistan failed to achieve stability. Secondly, Turkmen authorities maintained
serious reservations regarding Taliban. Eventually, the key Western financier of the
project, Unocal, withdrew from the project in 1998. As far as the Turkmen-Pakistan
pipeline project was concerned, Turkey did not see Pakistan as a rival, because the
aim of this venture and other potential pipeline projects bringing oil from the
Central Asian-Caspian sea region to Pakistan’s port of Gwadar was to ship it to
South-East Asian and Far Eastern regions. On the other hand, the Baku-Ceyhan gas
pipeline project and trans-Caucasus Caspian sea oil pipeline projects, which were
concluded in Istanbul in September 1999, are destined to export oil and gas
primarily to Western European countries. Islamabad’s support to the Taliban
regime in Kabul has also resulted in what is called the Talibanization of Pakistani
society. It has strengthened the influence of extremist Islamic forces in the
country’s polity, the-repercussions of which are being felt beyond the country’s
frontier, particularly across the Line of Control (LOC), which separates Pakistan-administered Kashmir from Indian-administered Kashmir.

In addition to Afghanistan, Kashmir is another issue where at least the
perceptions of Turkey have started to diverge with those of Pakistan. Turkey has
traditionally supported Pakistan’s official standpoint on Kashmir, which says that a
free and fair plebiscite in Kashmir under the supervision of the UN should take
place, as it was specified in the UN Security Council resolutions on Kashmir.
Ankara still does support the UN option for Kashmir settlement, but for the last
some years, it has started to stress the importance of India-Pakistan bilateral talks in
settling the issue. For its part, Pakistan has traditionally supported the UN-
supervised bi-zonal and bi-communal federal settlement on Cyprus. Since 1987,
Islamabad has allowed the TRNC to run a Trade and Tourism Representative
Office. Islamabad supports the Turkish Cypriot stance at all world forums. For
instance, at the October 1998 Commonwealth summit at Edinburgh, Pakistani
delegate was alone in defending the Turkish Cypriot cause, as India led efforts to
pass a resolution condemning the presence of Turkish troops in North Cyprus.
During the voting on the resolution, the Pakistani delegate abstained. As for the
Confederation option for Cyprus settlement, which Turkey and the TRNC now
back, the Foreign Office of Pakistan has not issued any particular statement in its
support. However, the country’s media has been backing it since August 1998,
when the proposal was officially presented by Turkish Cypriot President Rauf Denkash.

The divergence in Pakistani and Turkish perceptions on Kashmir has been clear since June 1999. In February 1999, the so-called Lahore process started between Pakistan and India, as Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee visited Lahore soon after Prime Minister Sharif invited him. The two leaders met and signed the Lahore Declaration, which called for the settlement of unresolved issues, including Kashmir, through bilateral means. The Lahore process was reversed following June when Kashmiri Mujahideen and allegedly Pakistani troops captured the Kargil Hills across the LOC in Indian-administered Kashmir. Indian and Pakistani troops posted along the LOC started exchanging heavy fire, and the situation became so tense that there emerged a possibility of major war between the two countries, which was avoided when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif dashed to Washington on 4 July 1999, met President Bill Clinton and the two leaders issued a joint statement on the necessity of “taking concrete steps for the restoration of status quo at LOC in Kashmir.” The Turkish Foreign Ministry backed the Washington statement, saying that the “Lahore process provides the most appropriate ground for resolution of the dispute between India and Pakistan.”  

The military government of General Pervez Musharraf has reversed the Lahore process, by reverting to the traditional UN-supervised mode of Kashmir settlement, and refusing to discuss with the Indian leader any aspect of India-Pakistan relations until Kashmir tops the agenda of talks. General Musharraf has stated his intention of meeting the Indian leader “anywhere, anytime”, but the process of bilateral talks between India and Pakistan as it had resumed in March 1997 included a whole gamut of areas covering mutual relations, from trade to cultural cooperation; and Kashmir was only one issue on the agenda. The difference of perception between the leaders of Pakistan and Turkey over Kashmir became clearer during the March-April 2000 visit to India by Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit. During the visit, Mr Ecevit shared Indian concerns on the issue of ‘cross-border terrorism,’ by pointing out that Turkey had itself been faced by this menace for a long time. Mr Ecevit was sharply criticized in the Pakistani media for making the said remarks. The only ‘cross-border terrorism’ that India faces is allegedly in the form of Mujahideen crossing the LOC and taking part in the Kashmiri uprising against Indian forces. Pakistan officially maintains that it provides only “moral and diplomatic support to Kashmiri freedom fighters,” and that Mujahideen organizations based in Pakistan and operating in the “Indian-Held Kashmir” are not controlled by the Government of Pakistan.
While Kashmir and Afghanistan remain the two most important areas where the Pakistan-Turkish perceptions and interests continue to diverge, Turkey’s growing ties with Israel and its stand on the nuclear issue are two more areas where the approaches of two countries differ. However, over the years, these differences have not negatively impacted the friendly nature of their mutual ties. Pakistan does not recognize Israel, yet, unlike Iran and some Arab states, it has never expressed any cause of concern against the Turkish Israeli connection. In other words, it understands Turkey’s compulsions and recognizes its interest in fostering ties with Tel Aviv. As regards the nuclear issue, even if Turkey has officially expressed its concern about Pakistan’s nuclear pursuits, it understands the country’s peculiar security requirements and the circumstances which have forced Islamabad to engage in nuclear arms race with India. This is clear from the cautious statement Turkey had issued in response to Pakistan’s nuclear tests in May 1998, which admitted that the tests were “carried out in response to India’s nuclear tests,” while urging Pakistan and India to exercise restraint “from now on”.

The interests and perceptions of Turkey and Pakistan on external issues of mutual concern will continue to diverge as long as each of them reacts differently to peculiar regional and global realities, demands and pressures, of the post-Cold War period. For instance, with regard to Afghanistan, the interests and perceptions of Turkey will continue to differ from those of Pakistan as long as Pakistan continues to support the Taliban regime in Afghanistan rather than working for the establishment in Kabul of a broad-based government consisting of all Afghan factions. On the issue of terrorism, Turkey shares the worldview championed particularly by the United States—that any form of ‘cross-border’ violence, whether or not it is linked to any community’s quest for the just right to self-determination, is condemnable. Thus, if Islamabad continues to practice a proactive Kashmir policy—which it has since the start of popular uprising in Indian-administered Kashmir in 1989—there is a danger that it may lose the traditional Turkish backing of Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. Prime Minister Ecevit’s statement in Delhi against ‘cross-border terrorism’ may be the beginning of the possible shift in Turkish stance on Kashmir. In short, the possibility of further divergence between the two countries over Afghanistan and Kashmir cannot be ruled out.

AN AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

The foremost challenge before the leaders of Pakistan and Turkey now is how to prevent the negative trends in relationship between the two countries, being
caused by growing divergence of mutual perceptions and interests over Afghanistan and Kashmir. As for their cooperation in mutually beneficial areas like trade, business, investment, defense, and tourism, a wide array of institutional arrangements and agreed frameworks is available for the purpose. What is needed is a sustained effort, supported by the necessary political will, to make best use of the already en vogue measures and processes. Once this happens, the existing areas of divergence may gradually converge due to the emergence of a commonality of interests built essentially around cooperative pursuits, particularly in the economic field.

Pakistan’s foreign policy requires fundamental rethinking, and reprioritization of goals. It is true that New Delhi is engaged in gross violation of human rights in Indian-administered Kashmir. It has deployed nearly 700,000 troops to quell the armed Kashmiri liberation struggle. Should the use of force by India in Kashmir be equated by Islamabad’s oversight, or alleged support, of extremist Islamic forces based on Pakistani territory and engaged in cross-border violence in the Indian-administered Kashmir? Or, should Pakistan discourage such forces from using its territory for the purpose? The resort to second choice will go a long way in improving its constantly eroding image in the comity of nations, including traditional friends like Turkey. At the same time, it will help the international community realize that the cause of the continued strife in Indian-administered Kashmir is not the alleged militant support from Pakistan-administered Kashmir’s side of the LOC: rather, it is the militant course adopted by New Delhi to deny the right to self-determination to Kashmir people. The most reasonable way to settle the Kashmir issue may be the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on Kashmir; but an essential requirement for this to happen is that both India and Pakistan should be willing to negotiate the matter through bilateral means. Be it Turkey or the United States or, for that matter, the international community—all external players wish India and Pakistan to come together and bilaterally negotiate Kashmir, an issue now widely recognized as a nuclear flashpoint. The amity in India-Pakistan relationship is essential in improving Islamabad’s ties with not only the United States but also the country’s traditional regional partners such as Iran and Turkey. As long as India remains concerned that Pakistan will disrupt the supply of natural gas from Iran to India, the agreed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project will remain in limbo. At a time when inter-state relations are dominated by the economic factor, Turkey will explore every avenue of external relationship, including its ties with India. During his March-April 2000 visit to India, Mr. Ecevit stressed to boost the annual trade volume between Turkey and India to “$2 billion within two years.” Against Pakistan’s average of $150 million, India’s trade volume with Turkey in 1998 was
$360 million. Thus, whether Islamabad likes it or not, Turkey will move forward in strengthening its economic and political ties with India.

It is only by settling Kashmir and improving relations with India, and establishing a broad-based government in Afghanistan after de-linking itself from Taliban, that Pakistan can have a bright economic future and consolidate its strained ties with hitherto friendly Iran and reverse the dwindling course of its historically-rooted ties with Turkey. As Ankara has its eyes upon the Baku-Ceyhan project, Islamabad must look similarly at the gas pipeline projects from Turkmenistan to Pakistan through Afghanistan and from Iran to India through Pakistan. The realization of these projects will generate hundreds of millions of dollars as royalty for the revenue-starved economy of Pakistan. The achievement of peace between India and Pakistan will itself help divert national resources to crucial areas of economic advancement.

Islamabad’s ties with Turkey in the current circumstances have to be seen within the broad parameters emphasized above. The same approach needs to be employed to address the nuclear issue and the question of Israeli recognition. As for the nuclear issue, Turkey has shown considerable understanding of Pakistan’s nuclear predicament. The issue of nuclear proliferation in South Asia cannot be dissociated from issues of global nuclear arms control, because India’s nuclear quest is globally oriented. Pakistan’s nuclear ambition, on the contrary, is India-specific. Since Turkey is officially committed to nuclear non-proliferation, it cannot openly endorse Pakistan’s nuclear perceptions, even if these are rational from the latter’s point of view. As for Israel, there are three reasons why Pakistan should recognize the Jewish entity. Firstly, when the Palestinians are negotiating with Tel Aviv and various Arab and North African Muslim states have reached an accommodating relationship with it, there is no reason why Pakistan should not follow the same course. Secondly, Turkey has emerged as the closest defense partner of Israel in the Middle East. The resort to such a realistic course has no doubt clouded Ankara’s ties with its eastern neighbours, particularly Iran, Syria and Iraq; but, by this way, Turkey has also increased its diplomatic leverage in the Western world, particularly the United States. Thirdly, by not recognizing Israel, Pakistan has let India to individually reap the benefits of its multi-faceted partnership with Israel, which has assumed a strategic dimension with the establishment in July 2000 of a Joint Commission on the Prevention of Terrorism between the two countries. It is the perceived fear of Pakistan’s ruling elites from Islamic extremists which forbids them from taking the bold step of Israeli recognition. The Jewish lobby in the United States could have been a great asset for Islamabad on the Kashmir issue, had it recognized Israel soon after Palestinians
started negotiating with the Israelis at the start of the 1990s. It is only since then that Ankara has consolidated its relationship with Israel.

Turkey’s foreign policy is essentially based on realism. So must be Pakistan’s. A foreign policy based on realism is not guided by the whims of passion, but based on a rational recognition of the existing national, regional and international realities. Pakistanis need to change their basic perceptions about modern Turkey. Turkey is no more a bastion of Islam, as it was commonly perceived to be by Muslims of the subcontinent during the Ottoman period. Times have changed now. In most of the world, religion and politics are not considered inseparable. For over three quarters of a century, the Turks have been marching on a secular path. Now Turkey is a forward-looking nation with strong nationalistic aspirations. Even though a section of Turkish society suffers from an identity crisis, especially when traditional values clash with Western norms, but the fact remains that Turkey is the only Muslim country which has proved that Islam and secularism can go together. Obviously, the challenges facing the Turkish polity in this context are far from over. However, the important thing to understand is that Turkey has achieved considerable success in the last decade in meeting the requirements of modernity. The EU is Pakistan’s biggest export market and a major source of financial aid. Given that, Turkey entry in the EU as a full member will benefit Pakistan’s economy considerably. It is Turkey’s EU connection that must be the motivating factor for Islamabad to make a concerted effort to remove the existing snags in its ties with Ankara. In addition, given Turkey’s deep engagement in Central Asia, Islamabad should try to coordinate closely with Ankara, bilaterally as well as through the ECO framework, in order to make its long-cherished Central Asian dream come true.

Democracy is universally accepted as a political system better than any other political dispensation. It has taken decades for Turkey to march credibly on the democratic path. Yet it was rather unconventional for the Turkish leaders to urge Chief Executive General Musharraf to restore democracy when he visited Turkey in November 1999. As for Mr Ecevit’s March-April 2000 visit to India, it was the first visit of a Turkish prime minister to India in over 20 years. The last Turkish prime minister to visit Pakistan was Mr Erbakan. During his visit in 1996, Mr Erbakan had extended an official invitation to his Pakistan counterpart, Ms Bhutto. However, neither she nor her successor, Mr Sharif, could pay an official visit, the invitation for which is still pending. Thus, technically speaking, it was not the Turkish prime minister’s turn to visit Pakistan. But, as history is a witness, the nature of Turkish-Pakistan relations has been such that the exchange of visits of the heads of government or state between the two countries has not been conditional to
such necessities of diplomatic protocol. Had Pakistan been under a civilian rule, any Turkish prime minister visiting India might not have ignored visiting it simultaneously to remove any misgivings among Pakistani people.

Thus, a marked change is visible in Turkey’s approach towards Pakistan: until October 1999, one consistent theme in Turkish-Pakistan relations, and pre-partition ties between Indian Muslims and the Turks under Ottomans and Ataturk, was that they remained unaffected by political, ideological or leadership changes in the two countries. Both countries experienced military coups, but their relations were not clouded by such events. In November 1999, it was for the first time that Turkey urged Pakistan to return to civilian rule. Mr Ecevit’s decision to bypass Pakistan during his South Asian sojourn may also have been motivated by his desire not to endorse the military rule of General Musharraf. However, more important than Mr Ecevit’s exclusive visit to India is the statement he issued in New Delhi against “cross-border terrorism”; which, in fact, signifies another shift in Turkey’s approach vis-à-vis Pakistan: even though since independence, the two countries had chosen two different ideological destinies, secularism versus Islam, their leaders tried hard not to let these domestic realities impact their mutually conducive relations. This may no more be the case. The message implicit in Mr Ecevit’s statement in India against cross-border terrorism was that Turkey shared India’s concerns regarding the spillover of Islamic extremism in Indian-administered Kashmir. The Turkish leadership is not alone in expressing such a concern. In July 2000, the Presidents of China, Russia and three Central Asian states, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan—the so-called Shanghai Five—met in Dushanbe and established an anti-terrorist center in Kyrgyz capital Bishkek to fight “cross-border incursions by Islamic extremists.” Whether it is Pakistan’s relationship with Turkey, or its ties with Central Asian states, or even its relations with the time-tested ally China, it is the extremist Islamic content of Pakistani polity, and its external reflections in particular, which are emerging as a major impediment in the country’s regional and international relationships. In short, Pakistan needs not only to restore the civilian order, it has to detach itself from Islamic extremism at home and across its frontiers.

It is clear from the review of the historical context of Turkish-Pakistan relations that throughout the Muslim rule in the subcontinent, especially during the Mogul period, Indian Muslims always perceived Turkey as the center of Muslim power. Indian Muslim rulers showed their allegiance towards the Ottomans whenever it was required. They asked the Ottomans for help whenever faced with dangerous circumstances. Indian Muslim people stood for the Turks \textit{en masse} whenever the latter were in trouble. Even if Mustafa Kemal Ataturk changed the
essence of Turkish polity, they hailed his struggle and reforms. Even though the Islamic circles, both in Turkey and Pakistan, criticize the Ataturk revolution and all that it entails, the enlightened elements in both countries are grateful to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk for building a modern state on the ruins of the Ottoman empire. When General Musharraf took over power and then publicly expressed his personal appreciation for Ataturk and the ideology of Kemalism, the enlightened writers in the Pakistani media hoped he would live up to his words. They still expect him to be the first leader to realize Jinnah’s ideal of a secular, liberal and forward-looking Pakistan as Turkey today is. In their editorials and columns, they frequently impress upon the General the urgency of introducing Kemalist reforms and express their disappointment for the lack of any concrete initiative from the military government towards this end thus far. There are others who urge him to restore democracy, just as former Turkish President General Kenan Avvan did. Whether it is the question of restoring democracy, or introducing secularism, or reviving economy, Turkey remains a role model for enlightened Pakistanis.

While a radical transformation in Pakistan’s internal social and political structure as well as its foreign policy outlook is essential to eliminate the existing and potential snags in the countries ties with Turkey, Islamabad also needs to fully exploit all the available institutional means to strengthen its partnership with Ankara in all the areas of bilateral and regional cooperation, including trade, business, investment, defense production, tourism, educational and cultural cooperation. So should Turkey. The strategies to realize this course are sufficiently discussed in our discussion on the convergence of Turkish-Pakistan perceptions and interests. Two additional points are worth-mentioning. The first relates to the question of illegal Pakistani immigrants. Some fake recruitment agencies in Pakistan, which reportedly work in collusion with government officials, promise safe passage and job to such immigrants, who use Turkey as a springboard to reach Europe. In some recent incidents, several illegal immigrants from Pakistan have been shot dead by security guards while illegally crossing the Turkish border with Greece. What forces people to migrate to foreign lands illegally, even risking their lives, is indeed a sad tale. But in the context of Pakistan-Turkish relationship, the issue has been deeply embarrassing for the former. The criminal elements involved in this heinous business of human trade should not be allowed to mar the generally cooperative spirit of Pakistan-Turkish ties. The second point concerns the business sector in Turkey, whose current orientation, as stated before, is only towards the West, particularly Europe. It is true that, politically, the East has least to offer Turkey. It is full of problems of grave nature—poverty, ethnic strife, uncertainty, rivalry, war, and Sheikdoms. But, at the same time, the East is also lived by a mass of humanity, and has a huge consumer population. The expanding business sector
in Turkey has to take cognizance of this reality. It must rethink its obsession with Europe and re-orient its products to eastern markets.

Nations who know how to adjust and live according to the spirit of the times never fail. Turkey will not, if it does not falter on the current course towards modernity. But Pakistan may, if the forces of bigotry are not overpowered. Pakistan direly needs to revive the Sufi creed of Islam, which was shattered by General Ziaul Haq’s 11 years of Islamic experiment in the country. Until the 1970s, Islamism in Pakistan had a pacifist nature, just like Ottoman or Turkish version of Islam. The militant-Arab style of Islam surfaced in the country only during the Zia period, particularly due to Pakistan’s active engagement in the Afghan/Arab Jihad against Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Now a decade after the Soviet demise and US disengagement from Afghanistan, the Jehadi struggle for power has widened its regional confines, resulting in serious implications for Pakistan. Until and unless the radical shift in Pakistan’s Islamic identity from pacifism to extremism is checked and reversed, and all of its militant ramifications are removed, Pakistan will continue to experience problems in its regional and international relationships, including ties with Turkey. It is upon the leaders and people of Pakistan to take the great leap forward towards modernity and Islamic pacifism. For its part, Turkey must remain deeply engaged with Pakistan in multi-dimensional ways, both bilaterally and through the existing arrangements for regional cooperation. By doing so, Ankara will offer a helping hand to the enlightened circles in Pakistan’s state, society, politics and media who wish their country followed the same national course as has been pursued by the Turks since 1923.

ENDNOTES

1 For details on the historical link between Muslims of the Indian subcontinent and the Turks during the Ottoman period as well as the role of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, see Turkey and Pakistan: Relations between Turks and Muslims of Indo-Pak Subcontinent. Karachi: Pakistan Publications, 1968, pp 5-52. The publication of the 63-page book, hereafter cited as Turkey and Pakistan, was an initiative of the Government of Pakistan, which explains how much importance Pakistan officially attached to fostering its relationship with Turkey by publicizing its historical context. Many Urdu poets and writers like Maulana Shibli Nomani, Sir Abdul Qadir, Munshi Mahbub Alam, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Maulana Muhammad Ali, and Maulana Zafar Ali Khan have written volumes of works on the Ottoman history, the achievements of Ataturk and modern Turkey, its art and culture.

2 Securing Ottoman Caliphate’s confirmation for the throne was a tradition followed by Muslims rulers of the subcontinent, including those of princely states, with the primary purpose of securing political legitimacy for their rule among at least their Muslim subjects. This, in turn, helped
establish the supremacy of the Ottoman Caliphate over the subcontinent. In addition, each year, the Haj at Holy Ka’aba was an occasion where Muslim rulers used to express their loyalty to the Ottoman Caliph, in whose name the Khutaba at Arafat was recited.

3 For a comprehensive Turkish perspective on the Khilafat Movement, see Dr Mim Kemal Oke, Tekhrik-i-Khilafat, translated by Dr Nisar Ahmad Asrar and published by Sang-e-Meel Publishers, Lahore, 1995.

4 While reviewing Dr Mim’s book Tekhrik-i-Khilafat, Prof Ziauddin Ahmad terms Gandhi’s bid to join the Khilafat Movement as a “shrewd” political move. See Prof Ziauddin Ahmad, “A History of Khilafat Movement,” Dawn, 20 October 1995.


6 See Turkey and Pakistan, p 52.


9 No surprise then that one of the first agreements that Turkey and Pakistan concluded in the formative phase of their relationship was the 1953 Cultural Cooperation Agreement. For a narration of Turkish-Pakistan relations between 1947 and 1967, see Turkey and Pakistan, pp 53-63.

10 In fact, the 1950s laid the foundation of such non-political ties between the two countries. During this decade, Pakistan was visited by various Turkish cultural delegations, including a student delegation led by Prof Daniyal Bediz of the University of Ankara, a religious delegation led by leading parliamentarian Omer Riza Dogrul, a women delegation led by the editor of Kadin Gazetesı Iflet Halim Oraz. Similar Pakistani delegations visited Turkey during this time, including one led by Prof Abu Bakr Ahmad Haleem, President of the Pakistan-Turkish Cultural Association. At the University of Ankara, a Chair for Pakistan Studies was established, and the Pakistani Universities of Punjab, Karachi and Peshawar set up Turkish language departments. Many works of Allama Muhammad Iqbal were translated into Turkish, and, in this context, the name of Prof Ali Nishat Taralan of the University of Istanbul is worth-mentioning. Over the years, Mehmet Akif (the composer of Turkish national anthem and an admirer of Iqbal), Ziya Gokalp, Halide Edib, Said Halim Pasha, Namik Kemal, Yashar Kemal, Aziz Nesin, and Nazim Hikmet became popular among the literary circles of Pakistan; just as Mirza Ghalib, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Faiz Ahmad Faiz and some other Pakistani poets, novelists and writers became known to the literary circles of Turkey.

Among contemporary Pakistani intellectuals writing on Turkish affairs, the name of Col (retd) Masud Akhtar Sheikh is most prominent. His main published and unpublished works include: Laugh of Lament? (works of Aziz Nesin); Hundred Poems of Nazim Hikmet (English translation); Turkey Mein Urdu (published by Pakistan’s National Language Authority); Turkey Ke Behtarin Kahanian (25 short stories written by 17 Turkish writers, published in Urdu by Dost Publishers); and Tamasha-e-Ahle Karam (selected Turkish short stories, translated into Urdu). There are other Pakistan writers, associated at some time with the Pakistan Chairs at the Istanbul University and Ankara University, who have explored the Turkish world. For instance, Dr N Ahmad Asrar has written two thought-provoking unpublished papers titled “Allama Dr Muhammad Iqbal and Turkey” and “Cultural, Linguistic and Literary Ties between Pakistan and Turkey.” Dr
Muhammad Yakub Mughal wrote the Turkish language book, Modern Turkish for Beginners. Dr. Gauhar Naushahi has published a book titled Farhang-e-Mushtrak about the common vocabulary of ECO countries.

President Celal Bayar was the first Turkish leader to visit Pakistan for eight days. So moved was he by the warm and emotional public reception that he could not help making the following remarks in his speech in Lahore: “My people will always remember with gratitude and affection how the Pakistanis held this torch erect in their noble hands even in their most difficult days, and how they rushed to help their Turkish brothers even at the expense of their own vital necessities. Apart from the unity of conscience based on the noblest human ideas which bind us, our vital interests are also one. We are fully aware of our international responsibilities which call upon us to work together for the establishment of world peace…” See Turkey and Pakistan, p 57.

The Baghdad Pact was developed under US encouragement and represented the Middle Eastern “northern tier” in a global series of alliances fostered by US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to “contain communist expansionism.” Although the United States did not join the Pact, it did provide military and economic aid to pact members and, in November 1956, issued a declaration of support for the Pact as well as independence and territorial integrity of its members.

While the British were preparing to de-colonize Cyprus and debating the option for Cypriot governance after their withdrawal, President Iskander Mirza, during his July 1956 visit to Turkey, stated: “I categorically say that my Government fully appreciates the justice of the Turkish cause in the matter of Cyprus. We have on more than one occasion made it clear that we shall not support any solution to this question which does not hold the approval of the Turkish Government.” As for Kashmir, throughout the 1948-49 India-Pakistan war over Kashmir and the 1950s when the issue of Kashmir was hotly debated at the United Nations, Turkey extended its full official support to Pakistan on Kashmir. The same enthusiasm was shown by the Turkish media on the Kashmir question. See Turkey and Pakistan, p 57.

Like the Baghdad Pact, the United States did not join the CENTO. However, US envoys participated in CENTO committee sessions. In addition, in 1959, the United States concluded bilateral security and defense agreements with Iran, Turkey and Pakistan.

However, Prime Minister Demirel during his April 1967 visit to Pakistan remarked, “Turkey’s trade with Pakistan, which a few years ago was practically nil, has now reached a level of approximately two million dollars.”

See The Divided Island, p 158.

Turkish Daily News, 23 March 1998. Also see Pakistan-Turkish Relations. Islamabad: Printing Corporation of Pakistan Press, for the Ministry of Information, 1998. Hereafter quoted as Pakistan-Turkish Relations.

See The Divided Island, pp 158-162.

Turkish Daily News, 23 March 1998.

Turkish Daily News, 23 March 1998.

The Nation, 6 March 1998.

Turkish Daily News, 23 March 1998.


In addition, the visiting Turkish minister and JMC co-chairman also announced the planned negotiations between the NHA and Turkish private investors on the Karachi Northern Bypass


29 See *Pakistan-Turkish Relations*.

30 ‘Cooperation for the development of inland and coastal aquaculture’ is an area of responsibility for Islamabad. A commission created to ensure cooperation in the field has been meeting periodically to coordinate the activities of the member states. For the purpose, in February 1998, a three-day workshop was held in Islamabad, which recommended the establishment of the D-8 Aquaculture Information and Monitoring Centre. A directory of aquaculture experts, scientists, institutes and capabilities in the D-8 countries has been published. See [http://www/forish.org/D-8.html](http://www/forish.org/D-8.html), 3 March 2000.

31 In the area of trade, the ECO strategy envisages the gradual removal of trade barriers, efforts for greater market access; expansion of existing preferential tariff arrangements; simplification and harmonization of national procedures in customs, transit of goods, attraction and protection of investment; adoption of a common approach in dealing with regional economic groupings and relevant international organizations, particularly World Trade Organization; encouragement of border trade and free trade zone; and gradual standardization of goods and products of the region. In the transport and communications field, the ECO strategy envisages short, medium and long term measures for the facilitation of transportation and transit of goods and passengers within the ECO region. In the energy sector, the strategy provides for the preparation of an Energy Master Plan as well as transit facilitation measures for energy, oil and gas pipelines and other energy resources including access to international market. See [http://www/forish.org/eco.html](http://www/forish.org/eco.html), 3 March 2000.

32 See *The News*, 11 June 2000. The sixth ECO summit also welcomed the decision to hold the ministerial meetings in agriculture, industry and human development sectors. It expressed satisfaction over the pace of progress achieved in the implementation of the ECO Decade of Transport & Communications (1998-2007), approved in the second ECO ministerial meeting on transport and communications (1998), particularly the steps being taken to develop railway transportation in the ECO region, and called upon the member states to accelerate their efforts in successful execution of these endeavors. The ECO summit also called upon the concerned member states to complete the pending formalities for the early establishment and operation of the ECO Trade and Development Bank and ECO Reinsurance Company. The summit welcomed the holding of the first energy/petroleum ministers’ meeting in Islamabad in November 2000 and called upon the member states to cooperate fully for a successful outcome of this important event. It referred to the successful holding of the third ECO trade fair in Bandar Anzali (Iran) in July 1998 and welcomed the initiative of the Pakistan government to hold the next ECO trade fair in Karachi in the second half of the year 2000. Also see *The Nation*, 12 March 1995; 23 April 2000.

33 The reasons for the lack of progress in ECO level cooperation are sufficiently explained by Moonis Ahmar in an article, titled “Challenge of Cooperation” (*The News*, 8 May 2000). Moonis concludes the article by proposing a two-pronged strategy for the ECO: ‘First, to launch serious efforts for peace and stability in Afghanistan and Tajikistan because civil strife in the two countries has derailed endeavors for economic, trade, communication and infrastructure cooperation among the ECO member countries. Second, there is also a need to raise adequate funds in order to complete various projects as identified by the ministerial meetings of ECO from
time to time. Proposals like ECO bank, shipping company and other common organisations could only take off when there is enough capital and expertise.


The Nation, 13 May 1997.

See The Nation, 26 June 2000. Pakistan wished a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding on the gas pipeline project between Pakistan, Iran and India be concluded, including assurance by Teheran not to disrupt the gas flow to India under any circumstances. However, until mid 2000, India continued to maintain reservations on the matter.

The Nation, 3 April 1998.

In 1995, Turkmen President Niyazov signed an agreement with Unocal and its partner Saudi Delta Company in New York to build a gas pipeline through Afghanistan. The pipeline project envisaged transporting gas from the Dauletebad Field in southeastern Turkmenistan to a terminus in Central Pakistan. The 870-890 mile long gas pipeline with its capacity to transport up to 20 billion cubic meters of gas per year was meant not only to supplement Pakistan’s indigenous natural gas supply but also to “open up the possibility of eventually transporting Turkmenistan gas into the Indian market.” Following the ECO meeting in Ashgabat in May 1997, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Unocal/Delta signed an agreement to build the gas pipeline and to complete the consortium and financing of the project by the end of 1997. This deadline was extended for another year. However, due to unstable political conditions in Afghanistan and the refusal of the Taliban government in Kabul to endorse the terms of the pipeline project, Unocal announced in August 1998 that it was pulling out of this venture. Since then, the project has remained in a state of limbo. The situation will remain the same until peace returns to Afghanistan. Only the establishment of a broad-based government in Kabul is the solution. For more details, see The News, 21 May 2000.


For instance, Masud Akhtar Sheikh, in his column titled “When a Friend Betrays” (The News, 7 April 2000), wrote: “It was a very friendly gesture on the part of General Pervez Musharraf to have selected Turkey as one of the first countries to be visited by him soon after taking over the reins of government in Pakistan. Not bothering about the wrath of Pakistan’s Jamaat-i-Islami, he openly declared that Ataturk had always been a source of inspiration for him, and that he had a lot to learn from the Turkish experience. Rather than reciprocating the noble sentiments of the Chief Executive, the Ecevit government somehow preferred to follow the course set by America, the British Commonwealth, and the European Union, to express its displeasure at the turn of events in our country, advising Pakistan’s military rulers to revert to democracy without delay....We would certainly not mind cordial advice from our traditional friends, had it not been followed by actions and statements which are being interpreted by the people of Pakistan as impolite, if not insulting. Bulent Ecevit’s decision to visit India and bypass Pakistan was taken as a rude shock by our sensitive people. As a poet, he must be well aware of the fact that more you love a person the more jealous you feel when he starts flirting with your rival. Our (Pakistan) embassy in Ankara took pains to clarify that Pakistan had been bypassed for no other reason than shortage of time and the Turkish prime minister’s multifarious engagements at home. This was too unsophisticated an explanation to satisfy our people who still remember how Kenan Evren used to stopover at Karachi on his way to other countries of the East and back, purely as a matter of courtesy and a gesture of friendship.”

Rahimullah Yusufzai, in a column titled “A Friendless Pakistan?” (The News, May 8, 2000), wrote: “Turkey was one of the first countries he (General Pervaiz Musharraf) visited after the

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October 12 military takeover and he even tried to befriend the Turks by publicly praising, much to the chagrin of Pakistan’s Islamic lobby, Mustafa Kamal Ataturk. But it didn’t stop Turkey’s Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit from undertaking a visit to India and bypassing Pakistan… As for Ecevit, the veteran Turkish politician is known for his progressive, democratic and secular views and was thus likely to feel more comfortable in New Delhi than Islamabad. The fact that he is an Indophile and has translated the Hindu religious book Bhagvad Gita and Rabindranath Tagore’s Gitanjali into Turkish also explains his bent of mind. Challenged by the Islamists in Turkey and confronted with Kurd separatist movement, Ecevit also found common cause with India facing a string of separatist movements including one waged by the Kashmiri Muslims. Ecevit did mention this during his India visit when he said both Ankara and New Delhi were being targeted by terrorists. Islamabad has reasons to feel unhappy that Ecevit went to India and ignored Pakistan unlike the past when Turkish leaders would first visit Pakistan and then India. See also The News, 23 and 26 March; 1 April 2000.

44 Columnist Kamran Shafi, while urging General Musharraf to put the country in order and restore the civilian rule, wrote: “Kenan Avren kicked the country into shape and then just went away to live in a little house by the sea.” The Nation, 3 July 2000. “Ataturk’s was a soldier’s effort to provide a collective ‘lift’ to a defeated nation using multiple elements, including historical amnesia,” wrote Nasim Zehra, while mentioning how public expectation from General Musharraf to follow in the footsteps of the Turkish Founding Father was eroding. The News, 26 May 2000. Other leading columnists such as Ayaz Amir (Dawn) have repeatedly urged the General to following the Turkish way. See also the editorial of The Friday Times, 21-26 May 2000.