

Turkey in the UN Security Council: Its Election and Performance

BERDAL ARAL*

ABSTRACT

Turkey successfully gained provisional membership of the United Nations Security Council by receiving support from 151 states in the UN General Assembly. Turkey is serving in the SC for the period between January 1, 2009 and December 31, 2010. This historic achievement was the end product of arduous efforts on the part of the Erdoğan government which has braced itself for membership of the Security Council since 2003. Membership no doubt brings Turkey plenty of benefits, like enhancing Turkey's international political weight and prestige. However, it also poses challenges to the credibility of Turkey's multi-dimensional and assertive foreign policy with its strong tinge of fairness. Turkey ought now to take principled stances on many key issues relevant to international peace and security even at the cost of disappointing its long list of friends.

Turkey was elected to the provisional membership of the United Nations (UN) Security Council (hereinafter referred to as the 'SC' or 'Council') on October 17, 2008 by obtaining the support of 151 states in the UN General Assembly, out of a total of 192 states. Alongside Austria, which received 133 votes, Turkey defeated Iceland (87 votes) in the race for the representation of Western Europe on the Council between January 1, 2009 and December 31, 2010. By all accounts, this was a great achievement for a state—Turkey—that had been longing for a non-permanent seat in the SC since 1961.

As is well known, the SC consists of 15 member states.¹ Five among them are permanent members (Permanent-5 or P-5), while the rest are provisional (rotating, non-permanent) members. A provisional member of the SC is elected by the UN General Assembly to serve for two years. Non-permanent members of the

* Assoc. Prof, Department of International Relations, Fatih University, baral@fatih.edu.tr

Council cannot immediately get re-elected. The Permanent-5 consist of the five major victorious powers in World War Two, the United States of America (the USA), the United Kingdom (the UK), France, Russia and China. The first three of the Permanent-5 visibly played a pioneering role in the establishment of the UN and the designation of its functions. Though, under international law, states enjoy sovereign equality with equal rights and duties, “some are more equal than the others” in the SC. The Permanent-5 has also been given the right to veto a draft resolution even if the rest of the Council concurs. In order for a decision to get through, nine members of the SC have to vote in favor of the motion, with no blocking veto.

The core competencies of the SC are as follows:

- to determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken;
- to call on UN members to apply economic sanctions and other measures not involving the use of force to prevent or stop aggression;
- to take military action against an aggressor.²

SC resolutions are binding, unless the adopted text explicitly “advises” or “recommends” a particular mode of action.

After this brief introduction to the subject, it is timely to lay out the main questions which inform the major concerns of the present study: First, which strategies did Turkey pursue to get elected to the SC? Second, why did Turkey display such enthusiasm for membership in the SC? Third, what are the advantages and possible risks of Turkish membership in the SC? Fourth, what is Turkey’s position on major international issues with implications for international peace and security? Fifth, as seen through the eyes of those who advocate a more effective, egalitarian and transparent Council, what are the main weaknesses and problems associated with the SC? Fifth, what is the position of the current government on the major international issues that may be brought to the attention of the SC? Sixth, what are Turkey’s behavioral options in the SC? Finally, what can be said about the policy choices and voting preferences which Turkey has thus far made in the SC?

Turkey’s Election to the SC

The present Justice and Development Party (AKP, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) government braced itself for possible Turkish seat in the SC immediately after taking office. To achieve this goal, the government carefully set its eyes on a complex network of international actors ranging from states to international organiza-

tions with which to engage. This did not involve only persuasion, but also of the granting of economic rewards to an extensive list of the least-developed states from Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific. This ambitious diplomatic campaign on the diplomatic front could not possibly have been successful without the meteoric rise in Turkey's international standing, prestige, and power of influence since the end of 2002. As part of Turkey's diplomatic endeavors, Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül and his successor Ali Babacan held talks with their counterparts from well over 150 states between 2006 and 2008 as part of the Turkish diplomatic campaign. Turkey's ardent desire to gain a seat in the SC and its vigorous efforts to achieve this goal extended to opening new Turkish diplomatic missions in Africa and elsewhere, implementing a number of bold initiatives on the diplomatic front, acting as an intermediary in the resolution of some deep-seated conflicts in its near abroad and far afield as in the case of problems between Pakistan and Afghanistan, offering a friendly hand to its long-time adversaries such as Greece and Armenia and giving its blessings to the peaceful settlement of a host of problems that have bedeviled relations between Turkey and these two states, and to delivering economic assistance to many Least Developed States. That Turkey received a record high 151 votes in the UN General Assembly for membership in the SC is an endorsement of Turkey's growing international credibility by members of international society.

Government circles have repeatedly asserted that Turkey rightly deserves to take a seat in the SC. In addition to speaking favorably of Turkey's growing assertiveness, credibility and stature in international politics, Turkish official documents which sought to make a case for Turkish membership in the SC tended to draw on certain specific accomplishments of Turkish foreign policy:

First of all, Turkey's humanitarian and development assistance has been steadily rising in recent years enabling us to be designated as an "emerging donor."³ Secondly, Turkey's level of participation in the UN and other peacekeeping missions ranging from Haiti to Lebanon has shown a constant increase, making us an important contributor to such operations. Finally, Turkey is one of those countries which are well placed to play a moderating role in world affairs, bridging cultures through dialogue and mutual understanding, as evident by our co-sponsorship of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, along with Spain.

That Turkey received a record high 151 votes in the UN General Assembly for membership in the SC is an endorsement of Turkey's growing international credibility by members of international society

Furthermore, Turkey's active policies in forging regional cooperation schemes in its immediate region; its crucial standing in energy security issues due to its emerging role as a hub of energy routes; its dedication to reach out to and enhance its relations with far regions like Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, East Asia and the Pacific islands; and its membership in a multitude of international organizations representing various regions and cultures are also worth mentioning within the context of Turkey's actual and possible contributions to world peace.

In light of the foregoing, Turkey feels that it has indeed an added value to bring to the work of the UN. By the same token, we also believe that Turkey's contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security and its regional role as a bulwark of stability make it amply qualified to become a non-permanent member on the SC.⁴

Turkish Enthusiasm for Membership in the SC

On the question of why Turkey has displayed such enthusiasm for membership of the SC under the AKP government, I argue that the clues can be found in the following.

First, the AKP government has fashioned a new international role and mission for Turkey whose scope and vision far exceeded the governments that preceded it, with the limited exception of the short-lived Refahiyol government.⁵

Second, since the end of 2002, Turkey, under the AKP government, has managed to establish constructive and fruitful relations with ever-rising groupings of states, ranging from its immediate neighbors to states far afield, from the Western to the Eastern world, and from the rich north to the economically deprived south.

Third, Turkey has, under the AKP government, come to define itself as an axis state (*merkez ülke*). The lack of a vision, mission and self-confidence, which was broken with the demise of the Ottoman Empire, has, in the popular perception, now been restored.

Fourth, through membership of the SC, Turkey very much hopes to enhance its role in international politics and to increase its international prestige. National pride does no doubt play some role, as suggested by Jenkins:

There is little doubt that Turkey's main motivation in seeking a seat on the SC was simply national pride. Despite its often aggressive—even bellicose—nationalistic rhetoric, Turkey remains intensively sensitive to what it believes others think of it. Particularly under the AKP, the search for international prestige has become one of the main determinants of foreign policy.⁶

The bit about “bellicose rhetoric” does not really make sense for a government which pursues a policy of constructive engagement with foes and friends alike, but the rest squarely fits the Turkish bid for membership of the SC.

For Turkey, it is a herculean task to put up with the challenges of consistency, dynamism and fairness during its presence in the SC

Fifth, Turkey wants to demonstrate how it has a key role in bridging the conceptual gaps in the relations between the Western world on the one hand and the Muslim world and, at a more general level, the non-Western world on the other, and that can be constructively put into use through resolutions of the SC.

Sixth, Turkey—in all probability—also wants to make an impact on the European Union (EU) through its membership of the SC, to show that, once Turkey is incorporated into the EU, the EU will come to obtain the role of a prominent *political* actor, which it certainly lacks today.

No doubt, by obtaining a seat in the SC, Turkey will be able to have a say on major issues of international relations which are to be brought to the attention of the SC. Turkey’s perception and views on a host of issues ranging from the Iranian nuclear issue to the resolution of conflicts in the Caucasus, the Middle East, the Balkans and sub-Saharan Africa; and from appropriate SC action vis-à-vis states using illegal military force against other international actors to the definition of non-military activities that constitute threat to international peace and security. That Turkey has acted as a facilitator or mediator between plenty of adversarial nations, such as between Israel and Syria/Palestinians and the West and Iran, will no doubt enhance the credibility of Turkish arguments in the SC.⁷

The Pros and Cons of Turkish Membership in the SC

Immediately after Turkey’s election to the SC, Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan said that Turkey’s entry into the SC was the result of five years of work for this goal as well as for Turkey’s contributions to world peace. It was also a confirmation of Turkey’s growing weight in international politics and the trust that Turkey enjoys among a variety of different actors in international society. He asserted that this gave Turkey “the opportunity to play a more effective and active global role”.⁸ No doubt, gaining the status of a provisional member in the SC has boosted Turkey’s morale and self-confidence. Turkey is now (although temporarily) part of the club of ‘privileged’ states that make pronouncements about the fate of other international actors with often dramatic consequences. Besides, a member of the SC is in a better position to defend its interests in this platform than a

state outside it. The SC experience will almost certainly broaden the horizons of Turkish diplomacy.

This picture will not be complete, however, without mentioning some factors which may constrain the gains that Turkey hopes to make through membership of the SC. I would argue that the Western-orientation of Turkish diplomacy and the deep-rooted conformism of Turkish diplomats appear as the main weaknesses in Turkey's efforts to enhance its international stature thanks to a seat in the SC. Besides, the deceptive complexity of international politics may easily turn Turkish votes into a dangerous time bomb. For Turkey, it is a herculean task to put up with the challenges of consistency, dynamism and fairness during its presence in the SC. Although Turkey objectively has more in common with the Muslim world and, more generally, with the non-Western developing nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America based on economic, social and cultural traits, it has chosen to ally itself with the Western group of nations at the state level since the end of World War Two. Granting that Turkey's new foreign policy lays greater emphasis on justice and fairness in international politics, a head-on collision with its Western allies appears imminent if Turkey decides to stick to its principles in the SC.

In the course of its membership in the SC, Turkey will presumably be obliged to take clear-cut positions on a number of critical issues ranging from the Iranian nuclear issue to military enforcement measure or economic sanction against a non-Western state. The conventions of Turkish diplomacy dictate the taking of a non-committal position on issues which, if pressed too hard, will touch on Western strategic interests. Turkish diplomacy idealizes formalism and the status quo under the guise of 'neutrality'. Turkish diplomats rarely identify with the causes and struggles espoused by the Muslim world or the developing nations of the Third World. In other words, the language of anti-imperialism is not in tune with the behavioral instincts of Turkish diplomacy. Turkish diplomats' overall view of the world is shaped by an idealization of Western values and secularism (of the laicist brand with its deep-seated misgivings about religion) and positivism at their apex, and a superficial identification with Western notion of legality, perception of threats and conception of international society.⁹

Turkey ought now to take sides and hard decisions by virtue of its membership in the SC. The following harsh words coming from a Western observer should not be dismissed:

From 2009 onwards, Turkey will find it much more difficult to present itself as all things to all countries; and if, for example, the US tables a motion to apply sanctions against Iran at the SC, not antagonizing anybody will not be one of Turkey's options.¹⁰

Turkey may not be much strained by supporting a motion that brings about sanctions against, say, a Latin American or an East Asian state—so long as this is not seen as an imperialist plot by most of the non-Western world. We must not forget that the posture and voting preferences which Turkey adopts in the SC will

The posture and voting preferences which Turkey adopts in the SC will have immediate repercussions for the overall context of Turkish foreign policy

have immediate repercussions for the overall context of Turkish foreign policy. To give an example, should Turkey decide to support a widening of sanctions against Iran for its pursuit of a nuclear program, it would lose credibility in the Muslim world and the Third World. Besides, Iran would certainly adopt retaliatory measures against Turkey that could prove rather damaging to its economic and strategic interests. If, in contrast, Turkey refuses to go along with the advocates of heavier sanctions against Iran, it will almost certainly infuriate its Western allies, and its bid for EU membership may be hit by another damaging salvo.

Some Western circles have made it clear that they very much hope that Turkey will act in association with the Western bloc of nations in the SC. Indeed those who speak on behalf of the EU expressed their confidence that Turkey would vote in a way that would not undermine European interests.¹¹ This suggests that the Turkish performance in the SC will be monitored closely in EU circles to see if Turkey has aligned itself to the ‘common foreign and security policy’. Here is a major paradox as far as Turkey and the EU is concerned: should Turkey vote in parallel with the EU member states such as France and Britain in the SC, this will be well-appreciated by European actors, but such position will inevitably diminish the kind of ‘critical role’ which many non-Western states, and particularly Muslim ones, expect of Turkey. Besides, in such eventuality, Turkey will not be seen as a supporter of the causes of the powerless, the marginalized and the have-nots of the world. This posture would then lessen the political and strategic surplus which Turkey could add to the EU as an actor in world politics. The EU appears rather inflexible in seeking to coerce Turkey into adopting a docile role in the SC which, as it stands, is very much under the sway of states like the US, UK and France. One can thus predict that Turkey will find it extremely difficult to strike a balance between its own understanding of the threats to international peace and security and the types of response that they elicit from the prevailing posture of its Western allies in the SC.¹²

Another challenge posed by Turkey’s SC membership is the Turkish diplomats’ lack of knowledge and experience with regard to regions with which Turkey has had considerably weak ties in the past. Such is the case with Latin America,

sub-Saharan Africa, and East and Southeast Asia. But a major hindrance is that, in order to maintain the core values of the diplomatic profession with its Western-centric bias, distaste for unorthodox approaches to international society and laicist elitism, Turkey's Foreign Service has, over the years, resisted pressures to open itself up to a wider section of Turkish society and to increase the number of young recruits.¹³ This numerical and qualitative deficiency is going to be one factor that will, in all probability, weaken Turkey's hand in search of an effective role in the SC. The reason is simple: so long as the Turkish Foreign Ministry is not supplied by valuable and first-hand pieces of information dispatched by diplomats in the field, Turkey will not be able to put forward convincing arguments (of its own) during debates in the SC.

The Turkish Position on Major International Issues

What is the position of the current government on major international issues that may be brought to the attention of the SC? The answers to this question, however, should not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the Turkish representative is going to vote along these lines when these issues below are brought on the agenda of the SC.

To begin with, on the question of the Iranian nuclear issue, Turkey has repeatedly expressed its opposition to the imposition of wider sanctions against Iran. This position derives from two major considerations: First, another strong sanctions regime next to its borders will cost Turkey and Turkish companies dearly, as was painfully the case with the sanctions regime against Iraq. Secondly, as far as Turkey is concerned, Iran is a vital source of natural gas supply rivaling Russia and an important transit route. Meanwhile Turkey detests the idea of a (US) military confrontation with Iran, either with or without SC authorization. The Turkish government reckons that another war in the Middle East will be catastrophic for peace, prosperity and democracy in the region.¹⁴

As regards the proliferation of nuclear weapons, Turkey has a clear-cut position which sees the existence of such weapons worldwide, and more specifically in the region, as a major threat to peace. Consistent with this perspective, it does not have a nuclear armaments program. At a luncheon organized in 2006 for the candidacy of Turkey to the SC, the then Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül assured his audience that

non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament are important components of our foreign policy. As a result, Turkey is a party to all major international non-proliferation instruments and export control regimes, and shares the objective of universal adherence and effective implementation.¹⁵



Most of the SC resolutions adopted during Turkey's tenure recorded unanimous support by members of the SC.

It must be noted, besides, that Turkish decision-makers have on occasion warned Western governments that the huge arsenal of nuclear weapons possessed by Israel is among the major threats to the security of the Middle East.

On the Palestinian problem, Turkey advocates a two-state solution that would result in a viable and sustainable Palestinian state. It believes that the SC ought to take more robust action against Israel's aggressive policies towards Palestinians and some neighboring Arab states. International diplomatic engagement with the Palestinians, Turkey believes, should become more inclusive in order that the popularly elected Hamas movement is no longer isolated. Turkey's proclivity for inclusiveness and broad-based engagement in countries like Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq, long beset by political turmoil, is suggestive of Turkey's principled approach on the issue. This point was emphatically made by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu when speaking at the SC Meeting on the Situation in the Middle East on May 11, 2009:

One priority of Turkish foreign policy towards the region is to keep open dialogue channels with all parties and pursue an active policy of engagement. We welcome the fact that a growing number of countries have come to realize the merits of this policy and have adopted similar approaches.¹⁶

Turkey may choose to conceive and interpret international society and major issues of international relations from a Western perspective but remain critical within that paradigm

On the subject of international security, Turkey, under the AKP government, has, broadly speaking, continued to go along with the Western group of states in the identification of major threats to international peace and security and the means deployed to combat them. As an observer points out in the context of the

UN General Assembly debates,

UN records indicate that in drafting resolutions regarding...security issues..., Turkey seems to have preferred to follow the course of other countries instead of taking a leadership role. Some of the very rare issues that Turkey has proactively raised seem to be related to regional issues that directly or indirectly affect Turkey. These include the Cyprus issue and Armenia's unlawful occupation of Azerbaijani territory.¹⁷

This is not to suggest, however, that Turkey, under the present government has not raised misgivings about the *specific execution* of certain instruments put into use by the SC in combating international security threats like international terrorism. One crucial point of divergence with its Western allies, and in particular with the USA, is Turkey's more holistic approach towards international security issues that lays due emphasis on the social, economic and political aspects of security. Turkey sees problems of poverty, lack of democratic freedoms and civil wars as among the major causes of international military conflicts the world over.

Turkey's Behavioral Options in the SC

Broadly speaking, there are possibly three scenarios that may possibly play themselves out in the context of Turkey's behavioral posture and voting preferences in the SC.

First, Turkey may choose to align itself fully with the Western position, which is too frequently spearheaded by the US. Turkey might possibly tilt towards European positions on the rare occasions when the US and European positions do not fully converge. Such posture would possibly be rationalized by reference to Turkey's commitment to European integration. Otherwise, the rationale goes, Turkey's long-established policy of a pro-Western outlook and commitment to European integration may be put at risk. This role may be defined as 'uncritical alignment'.

Second, Turkey may choose to conceive and interpret international society and major issues of international relations from a Western perspective but remain

critical within that paradigm. For instance, Turkey may concur with the Western group of states in the way they define the major threats to international peace and security or the types of action which they envisage in the face of international aggression. But it might possibly seek to bring into the attention of the Council non-Western approaches, interpretations and perspectives concerning security issues. For example, while not challenging the dominant Western view that international terrorism or the spread of the weapons of mass destruction are among the most substantive threats to international peace and security, Turkey may draw on cases of state terrorism and on the threats posed by nuclear states, such as Israel, to regional and global peace. This role may be defined as ‘critical alignment’.

Third, Turkey may choose to get across its own perspective of what constitutes threats to international peace and security and propose unorthodox forms of action necessary to quell threats. For instance, Turkey may refer to hunger, poverty, excessive militarization, imperial interventions, and the existing stock of nuclear weapons as the most fundamental threats to international peace and security. Such paradigmatic shift in the Turkish attitude would very much be in tune with the progressive currents within Asian, African and Latin perspectives. Turkey may besides choose to vote against motions mandating economic sanctions or the use of force against non-Western states if they defy its sense of fairness or proportionality. If that were to be the case, Turkey would come to play a revolutionary role by challenging established orthodoxies in the SC. This role could be defined as ‘critical dissociation’.

A Short Glance at the Turkish Performance in the SC between January-September 2009

It is rather difficult to conceptualize about Turkey’s voting preferences at this point in time (October 2009) and to evaluate its overall performance in the SC. First, it has been only nine months since Turkey obtained a provisional seat in the SC. Second, most of the SC resolutions adopted during Turkey’s tenure recorded unanimous support by members of the SC. In such cases, it is nearly impossible to draw conclusions about Turkey’s conception of international society. Third, in rare instances when SC draft resolutions were accepted by a majority vote or were rejected as a result of a veto by a permanent member, with some exceptions scrutinized below, it was obvious that, on account of their subject matter, they would have very limited implications for the international order. The section which follows does not therefore delve into the SC resolutions which do not provide tangible clues about Turkey’s voting preferences in the SC.

A few words are due regarding the resolutions of the SC adopted unanimously in the first nine months of 2009. As argued above, such resolutions do not indicate anything peculiar about Turkey's position in the SC. Such has been the case with Resolution 1863 of January 16, 2009 which expressed the SC's intention to deploy UN peacekeeping troops in Somalia from June 2009.¹⁸ The anticipated resolution, likewise accepted unanimously in the form of Resolution 1872, was adopted on May 26, 2009. Resolution 1872 merely expressed the Council's support for the Djibouti Agreement as well as the extension of the mandate of the troops from African Union member of states in Somalia.¹⁹ Turkey likewise joined the rest of the SC in endorsing Resolution 1866 of February 13, 2009 which urged Russia and Georgia to refrain from using force against each other and extended the UN observer mission in Georgia for four months.²⁰ The SC similarly agreed unanimously through Resolution 1868 of March 23, 2009 to prolong the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for another year. The resolution also condemned attacks on civilian targets.²¹ Turkey likewise concurred with the rest of the members of the SC when this body, in adopting Resolution 1870 on April 3, 2009, extended the mandate of the UN mission in Sudan. This resolution also urged the parties to comply with Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 whose goal was to end the conflict in south Sudan.²² Resolution 1874 of June 12, 2009, which imposed an arms embargo and financial restrictions on North Korea in response to the nuclear test it had conducted on May 25, 2009, was the product of unanimous agreement among members of the SC.²³ Turkey also concurred with the rest of the SC members when the following resolutions concerning the extensions of the mandates of UN peacekeeping troops in various conflict-ridden countries were adopted unanimously during the summer of 2009: Resolution 1875 of June 23, 2009 extended the mandate of the UN force that monitored the Israel-Syria cease-fire;²⁴ Resolution 1876 renewed the task of the UN Peace-Building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau;²⁵ Resolution 1879 extended the mandate of the UN mission in Nepal;²⁶ Resolution 1880 renewed the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire;²⁷ Resolution 1881 extended the mandate of the African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Sudan's Darfur region (UNAMID);²⁸ Resolution 1883 renewed the task of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI);²⁹ Resolution 1884 extended the mandate of UNIFIL in Lebanon;³⁰ Resolution 1885 renewed the authority of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL);³¹ Resolution 1886 extended the mission of the UN Integrated Peace-Building Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL);³² Resolution 1890 renewed the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan;³³ and, finally, Resolution 1892 extended the authority of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).³⁴

In September 2009, the UN SC adopted a resolution on nuclear non-proliferation, likewise with unanimous agreement, in a gathering of heads of state or government. This decision deserves special focus because the speech made by the Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan before the votes were cast tells a great deal about the Turkish posture on one of the most fundamental issues of contemporary international relations, the nuclear issue. Resolution 1887³⁵ called on states which are non-parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty³⁶ (NPT) of 1968 to accede to the treaty as soon as possible and expressed the hope of achieving nuclear disarmament at some time in the future. During debates in the lead-up to the adoption of Resolution 1887, Erdoğan asserted that the subject of nuclear non-proliferation should be seen as an integral whole that consists of the three pillars of non-proliferation, disarmament, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. This suggested that, unlike the USA, UK and France, which, during debates in the SC, chose to draw the world's attention to the dangers posed by the possibility of Iran obtaining nuclear weapons, Turkey laid equal emphasis on the duties of nuclear powers to commit themselves to the goal of nuclear disarmament. Erdoğan reminded his audience that every state, including Iran, had a right to obtain civilian nuclear technology.³⁷ The substance of Erdoğan's speech, while by no means radical, seemed more in line with the views expressed by his Asian, African and Latin American counterparts in the SC than those voiced by his Western colleagues.

Naturally, the picture of unanimously agreed resolutions does not leave us with ample scope within which to evaluate Turkey's distinctive voting preferences in the SC. There were only three cases of UN resolutions which may provide us with some—limited—clues about Turkey's distinctive posture in the SC. First, in all probability, in matters which are directly linked to Turkish national interests and its foreign policy priorities, Turkey is not likely to shy away from casting votes which radically differ from those of its Western allies or even those of the remaining members of the SC. This was indeed the case when Turkey alone voted against Resolution 1873 of May 29, 2009, which extended the mandate of the UN peacekeeping forces in Cyprus for six months.³⁸ Turkey based its objections on the following points: first, the UN peacekeeping force deployed in Cyprus since 1963 was not accepted by either Turkish Cypriots or Turkey; second, this UN force did not function with the clear consent of both parties; third, the acceptance of Greek Cypriot administration as the sole representative of Cyprus was unacceptable.³⁹ Secondly, in cases of draft resolutions that are opposed by either Russia or China as permanent members but are supported by most other members, including the entire Western representation in the SC, Turkey is likely to vote along the lines of the majority. As an indication of this trend, Turkey acted as one of the sponsors of

Turkey has displayed a propensity to act in tandem with the rest of the SC when a common position is agreed on by members of the Council

a draft resolution together with Western members of the SC which envisioned the continuation of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia which had been in place since 1994. However, this draft was vetoed by Russia, while China, Libya, Uganda and Vietnam abstained. The Russian delegate

considered this draft as unacceptable in the light of the emergence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as sovereign states, which the draft simply bypassed.⁴⁰ Finally, Turkey may pursue a position which may either moderately or radically differ from the overall posture adopted by Western governments and their associates in the SC in cases of draft resolutions which may, in Turkey's view, unjustly victimize a Muslim state or political movement. SC Resolution 1860, adopted on January 8, 2009 in the wake of Israel's ruthless assault on Gaza which caused enormous human suffering and physical devastation, is a case in point. This resolution, endorsed by 14 members of the SC with the abstention of the US, called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza and for unimpeded access to those delivering humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza.⁴¹ Representing Turkey in the SC for this occasion, Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan hinted, after the motion went through, that the resolution did not go far enough in protecting the victims of Israeli aggression.⁴² Babacan's posture was echoed by the speech of his successor Ahmet Davutoğlu in the SC in May 2009 where he expressed views which went far beyond the rather discreet European position on the plight of the Palestinians:

We cannot turn a blind eye on the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories, particularly in Gaza. In this context, it is good to refer to the resolution 1860. But this is not enough. It is incumbent upon us to call for the full implementation of the resolution 1860 and address the humanitarian situation in Gaza by unimpeded provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance throughout the region.⁴³

Davutoğlu was likewise critical of illegal Jewish settlements in West Bank and other Israeli policies that defied international law and justice:

We are concerned with certain policies that could seriously hamper peace efforts. Among them are Jewish settlement activities; restrictions to the movement of Palestinian people and goods; actions and measures that could alter the character and status of Jerusalem and further isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the Palestinian Territory.⁴⁴

Finally, in the same speech, Davutoğlu expressed his objection to the isolation of Hamas by Western governments: "We need to engage every Palestinian group

which has the support of the Palestinian people and ensure that they all adhere to the principles of peace.”⁴⁵

Conclusion

A brief glance at Turkey’s performance in the UN SC indicates that Turkey has displayed a propensity to act in tandem with the rest of the SC when a common position is agreed on by members of the Council. One exception was the Turkish objection to the resolution about extending the mandate of the UN peacekeeping troops in Cyprus. Meanwhile, a speech by the Turkish foreign minister after the adoption of an SC resolution in January 2009 that called on Israel to end its assault on Gaza was a clear message about Turkey’s discontent over the weakness of that resolution. This posture no doubt separated Turkey out from the US and European positions in the SC. These two pieces of evidence may be indicative of Turkey’s anticipated posture in the SC: remaining by and large within the Western paradigm about international security, and hence seeking to act in tandem with the Western group of nations unless a particular issue concerns its vital national interests, but assuming a critical role within that paradigm, especially in respect of resolutions which are likely to produce—unjustly—Muslim victimhood. The limited evidence we have then suggests that the Turkish posture in the SC fits the second scenario, as sketched out above, which may be coined as ‘critical alignment’. The Turkish posture as reflected in statements made by the Turkish representative during debates in the Council and its voting preferences may thus at times collide with the predominant coalition as represented by the US, UK, France and their accomplices. Turkish conceptions about the main threats to international peace and security today are not quite the same as those adopted by its NATO allies, since Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, while drawing on classical threats like military aggression and international terrorism, have on different occasions pointed to state terrorism and the existence of nuclear weapons as other causes of wars and conflicts in the world.

Endnotes

1. Initially, non-permanent membership was capped at six. Later, in 1965, rotating members were increased to ten.

2. http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_functions.html. A state engaged in an illegal use of force in its international relations is considered to be an ‘aggressor’.

3. The same document declared that Turkey’s official development assistance between 2005 and 2008 “ranged between 600 to 700 million US Dollars per year. When we include, for the same period, the aid provided by our private sector and the NGOs, the figure for our total assistance ranges between 1.1 to 1.7 billion US Dollars per year.” (Turkey’s Priorities for the 63rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly,” September 2008, Accessed at <http://www.un.int/turkey/63rdGA.pdf>).

4. Turkey's Priorities for the 63rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly,"

5. This was a coalition government which was formed by—in the view of its political foes—the Islamic-leaning Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) and the centre-right True Path Party (DYP, *Doğru Yol Partisi*) in June 1996 under the premiership of Necmeddin Erbakan. This party was removed from power in June 1997 through what is commonly-known as a 'post-modern coup' engineered by the army in liaison with the president of the Republic, Süleyman Demirel, some political parties and the laicist segments of the media, bureaucracy, judiciary, businessmen's associations and trade unions for allegedly 'undermining Turkish secularism'. This government sought to deepen Turkey's ties with the Muslim world which, upon Erbakan's initiative, saw the inauguration of the D-8 (Developing 8) as a new international organization which brought together eight prominent Muslim states to bring about economic integration.

6. Gareth Jenkins, "Turkey's SC Seat Promises Challenges as well as Kudos", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 5, issue: 200, October 20, 2008, accessed at http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34035.

7. Süreyya Seyyahoğlu, "BM Güvenlik Konseyi Üyeliği", *Dünya Bülteni*, 21 Ekim 2008.

8. <http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=4239389>. Turkey, under the government of Justice and Development Party, has displayed a willingness to pose as an international actor that entangles itself in the issues of global concern, such as disarmament and problems of poverty, while playing the role of an axis state in the regions surrounding Turkey.

9. This theme is studied in an article of mine, published in 2004, in the context of Turkey's voting preferences in the UN General Assembly on the 'progressive' issues of international law such as the right of self-determination, human rights and the search for a new international economic order during the course of the Cold War: Berdal Aral, "Fifty Years on: Turkey's Voting Orientation at the UN General Assembly, 1948-97", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2, March 2004, 137-160.

10. Jenkins, "Turkey's SC Seat Promises Challenges as well as Kudos"

11. Immediately after Turkey's election to the SC, Olli Rehn, the European Commissioner Responsible for Enlargement, uttered the following words: "I believe Turkey will use her seat to promote and improve Europe's common values".

12. Seyyahoğlu, "BM Güvenlik Konseyi Üyeliği"

13. Seyyahoğlu, "BM Güvenlik Konseyi Üyeliği"

14. Akif Kirecci, "Turkey in the United Nations SC", *SETA Policy Brief*, January 2009, p.9.

15. Speech Delivered by Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül at the Luncheon for the Candidacy of Turkey to the SC for the Term 2009-2010 (April 19, 2006, Ankara Palace, accessed at <http://www.un.int/turkey/page17.html>).

16. Statement by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu at the United Nations SC Meeting on the Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question, May 11, 2009, New York, accessed at http://www.mfa.gov.tr/statement-by-h_e_-ahmet-davutoglu_-the-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-turkey_-at-the-united-nations-security-cou.en.mfa.

17. Mehmet Kalyoncu, "Seeking a seat for Turkey at SC", *Today's Zaman*, October 17, 2008.

18. Resolution 1863, January 16, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/211/65/PDF/N0921165.pdf?OpenElement>.

19. Resolution 1872, May 26, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/349/46/PDF/N0934946.pdf?OpenElement>.

20. Resolution 1866, February 13, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/238/26/PDF/N0923826.pdf?OpenElement>.

21. Resolution 1868, March 23, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/277/12/PDF/N0927712.pdf?OpenElement>.
22. Resolution 1870, April 30, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/320/46/PDF/N0932046.pdf?OpenElement>.
23. Resolution 1874, June 12, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/368/49/PDF/N0936849.pdf?OpenElement>.
24. Resolution 1875, June 23, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/377/40/PDF/N0937740.pdf?OpenElement>.
25. Resolution 1876, June 26, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/384/34/PDF/N0938434.pdf?OpenElement>.
26. Resolution 1879, July 23, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/421/42/PDF/N0942142.pdf?OpenElement>.
27. Resolution 1880, July 30, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/433/60/PDF/N0943360.pdf?OpenElement>.
28. Resolution 1881, August 6, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/433/93/PDF/N0943393.pdf?OpenElement>.
29. Resolution 1883, August 7, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/449/49/PDF/N0944949.pdf?OpenElement>.
30. Resolution 1884, August 27, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/496/60/PDF/N0949660.pdf?OpenElement>.
31. Resolution 1885, September 15, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/514/01/PDF/N0951401.pdf?OpenElement>.
32. Resolution 1886, September 15, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/514/07/PDF/N0951407.pdf?OpenElement>.
33. Resolution 1890, October 8, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/550/19/PDF/N0955019.pdf?OpenElement>.
34. Resolution 1892, October 13, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/556/43/PDF/N0955643.pdf?OpenElement>.
35. Resolution 1887, September 24, 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/523/74/PDF/N0952374.pdf?OpenElement>.
36. Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, July 1, 1968, accessed at <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc140.pdf>.
37. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sc9746.doc.htm>. International law permits states to obtain nuclear technology for peaceful use. Erdoğan asserts that the international pressure on Iran for its alleged quest for producing nuclear weapons should not amount to denying Iran the right to procure nuclear technology for use in the energy sector.
38. Resolution 1873, May, 29 2009, accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/354/35/PDF/N0935435.pdf?OpenElement>.
39. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sc9668.doc.htm>. Turkey argues that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus qualifies as a state and ought to be recognized as such by the international community. This claim, in this view, has gained greater credence since the Greek Cypriots rejected the Annan Plan, whose goal was to unite Cyprus under a bi-zonal and bi-national federation, in a referendum held in 2004.
40. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sc9681.doc.htm>. Russia recognized Abkhazia

and South Ossetia, then part of Georgia, in the aftermath of Russian-Georgian war in August 2008 as independent states. Thus, Russia objected to the resolution, because of its supposition that Georgia's territorial integrity had remained intact.

41. Resolution 1860, January 8, 2009, accessed at [http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/204/32/PDF/N0920432.pdf? OpenElement](http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/204/32/PDF/N0920432.pdf?OpenElement).

42. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sc9567.doc.htm>. Babacan hinted that Turkey was not satisfied with the timing and substance of Resolution 1860. In all probability, Babacan did not consider that the resolution faced up to the challenges posed by the colossal humanitarian and physical damage (1550 dead, 5500 wounded, excessive destruction of Gaza) caused by Israel during its relentless military assault on Gaza. Besides, it did not address the two-year-old blockade of Israel over Gaza, that turned Gaza into an 'open prison' and its habitants into hapless captives in their own land.

43. Statement by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu at the United Nations SC Meeting on the Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question, May 11, 2009.

44. Statement by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu at the United Nations SC Meeting on the Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question, May 11, 2009.

45. Statement by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu at the United Nations SC Meeting on the Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question, May 11, 2009.