

TURKEY IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD: AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

During the Cold War, Turkish foreign policy toward the Islamic world was affected by the Cold War environment and mainly security concerns. From World War II to the beginning of the 1960s, Turkey pursued a policy that was mostly defined within its western relations. During this period, for example, Turkey briefly followed an active foreign policy in the Middle East and tried to play leadership role in any organization that would help to create a link with the Western alliance. In this period, Turkish foreign policy was mostly western-oriented and based on securing itself from the Soviet threat. In 1960s and 1970s, however, the circumstances that had led Turkey to link its security interest completely with those of the United States underwent significant changes. The Cyprus crisis, the letter from President Johnson and the US arms embargo led Turkey to take new directions and investigate other options. In this environment, Turkey developed its relations with the Third World countries

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and Islamic world in general, and with the Middle East in particular. Turkey showed more interest in Arab-Israeli issue and Middle East problems, but strictly followed its policy of non-interference in regional affairs. By the 1980s, Turkey's Middle East policy had undergone significant changes. Thanks to the economic crisis of the late 1970s, Turkey modified its policy toward the region. This changing and developing of the economic relations had repercussions and, consequently, paved the way for new directions in political and social areas. The Gulf Crisis in 1990 indicated a turning point in its relations with the Middle East and Turkey has started to play an active role in the region.

In short, during the Cold War, as Robins (1991:114) rightly stresses, despite four or more decades of coexistence with independent states in the region, Turkey had not been built a solid, reliable working relationship with most of the Middle Eastern countries and Islamic world. As a whole, when one looks at Turkey's Middle East policy prior to 1990s, notably until the Gulf Crisis, Ankara was unable to establish a balanced, coherent foreign policy approach toward the region. It was also the same towards the Islamic world.

However, with the Gulf War, Turkey started to follow an active policy towards the Middle East especially and Islamic world in general. This active policy was mostly economic oriented, but opened the way for further developing relations in the future. Basing on this opening, in 1996-7, the then Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan pursued an active policy towards the Islamic world. He played leading role in establishing the Developing Eight (D-8) grouping and furthered Ankara's relations economically with Islamic countries. While Erbakan wanted to have greater relations with them, this was unacceptable to Turkey's secular state establishments. This became one of the reasons for his ousting from power in 1997. Turkey's last discovery of the Islamic world was when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in Turkey in 2002. Coupled with the American invasion of Iraq and Cyprus issues, Turkey had to face difficult dilemmas in its foreign relations. The

Turkish Parliament rejected the American request to open its Iraqi border for the deployment of American soldier on 1 Mart 2003, and this created an unintended consequence for Turkey in the Islamic world. Turkey is not seen as an `agent` by the Islamic world, but as a country that has its own perspectives on the issues.

As mentioned earlier, due to the Cold War's systemic character and some other reasons, Turkey was not able to utilize opportunities in the Middle East. However, over the last few years 'a process of reform and reorientation' (Falk, 27 Sep 2004, *Zaman*) has been taking place in Turkey, not least in its foreign policy. Much more in line with its orientation in foreign policy, a 'more impressive and subtler' one is its movement to improve its relations with the Islamic neighbors in particular and all Islamic countries in general (Falk, 27 Sep 2004, *Zaman*).

In this article, a general survey of Turkey's relations with three key organizations in the Islamic world will be outlined: the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and Developing Eight (D-8). Turkey's relations with them will be analyzed through a historical perspective and its possible contributions to them for making them influential in global politics will also be discussed.

1- Turkey and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)

In today's international arena, the largest explicitly Islamic international organization is the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). As Voll (1997:239) explains, it is not a 'fundamentalist' Islamic organization but is clearly one of the significant institutions of global political Islam, or Islamic polity. It was established in 1969 by a group of Muslim states following an attack by an arsonist in Jerusalem on al-Aqsa mosque, which at that time had just recently come under Israeli control. The OIC is an interstate organization that seeks to mobilize efforts of Muslims around the world and has dealt with many political issues, some with successful results and some not so successful.

The fifty-seven countries that constitute the OIC have vastly differing political and social structures, and vary greatly in population, size, and economic status, as well as geopolitical inclination. These great differences underlay the organization's *raison d'être* as solely religious-ideological function. As a political, economic, and cultural conglomeration of Muslim states spread over four continents, the OIC cannot be considered a *regional* organization (Landau, 1990:290); yet, it cannot be deemed a *universal* association of states either, because of its disinterest in attracting Third World members indiscriminately (Sheikh, 2002:45). Ideological landscape, i.e., being a Muslim state, is the main criteria for membership. However, given its representation of a universal religion and followers, it could be regarded as an ideology-oriented global organization. As a major international Islamic organization, the OIC retains a nation-state orientation while pursuing greater Islamic cooperation, creating a great gap between normative vision and political reality (Esposito, 1984:233).

After the Cold War, most of the international institutions adapted themselves to new international order. The European Community and Organization of African Union are a few to mention to have adapted to new global needs. The Organization of the Islamic Conference has become one of the international institutions unable to adapt and change within the new environment. Historically, the OIC has been effectively constrained by the sanctity of state sovereignty. Since its formative period, the OIC has always operated with a defensive mindset (Akbarzadeh and Connor, 2005:80).¹ Far from initiating projects, its policy approach to global issues has become *ad hoc* in nature and temporary in results. Despite its long history, the OIC had a disappointing record. Mostly stricken by infighting, power struggles and failure to articulate clear and consistent policies, the OIC is more a symbolic meeting place than a dynamic political body.

¹ The formation of the OIC was in response to an arson attack upon the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. One might claim that even the formation was in defensive in nature.

During the Cold War, it was understandable to see the OIC as ineffective in global politics because of the nature of the international system which led some members to be aligned with the US and others with either with the Soviet Bloc, while some chose to non-aligned. This kind of effect of the Cold War might be extended to all regionally or religiously based organizations. The main principle example was the Organization of African Unity (OAU) that shared same destiny with the OIC regarding the foreign policy orientations of its members. Most of scholars recognize that the OIC was founded on the model of the Organization of African Unity during the Cold War (Ahmed, 1990:7). After the Cold War, while the OAU adapted itself to the new condition of the post-Cold War by changing itself to the African Union (Magliveras and Naldi, 2002), the OIC is still considering this initial transformation, even though the Muslim world and Islamic issues have become one of the main themes of global politics.

From the outset, the OIC focused on anti-Israeli sentiment (Landau, 1990:288), support for Palestinian cause and development of unity among Muslims. Though theoretically these are the right causes for Islamic countries, in practice the OIC was unable to make any *real* contribution. Furthermore, given the diversity of membership, it is not surprising that the OIC has in the past been the arena for competition between two states with the leadership aspirations: Iran and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, in some respects, the OIC is a child of 'Arab cold war,' which had bifurcated the regional system of the Middle East in the 1960s (Sheikh, 2002:47).

Today the question remains as to how an organization of 57 member-states, representing billions of people, vast natural resources and a significant proportion of the global landmines, can continuously fail to resolve the political situation that provided the impetus for its formation nearly 40 years ago. Today the OIC has placed itself in a position that either will lead it to continue its survival by adapting itself, or to be left on history pages as an ineffective organization. In that regard, the main problem that the OIC faces is a schism between declared ideals and reality.

As described by Malaysian Foreign Minister and then Chair of the OIC in June 2005, the real problem of the OIC is that it is only 'an organization of conference countries'. It is a 'loose movement.' He also admits that the OIC is 'not able to meet the challenges of today.' Regarding reform in the OIC, he clearly points out the needs of OIC as an organization. For him, the OIC 'must have a very strong secretariat that would able to improve the image of Islamic countries' (www.islam-online.net, 28 June 2005).

Given its 'loose movement' and 'an organization of conference countries' status, the OIC should be understood in terms of *arena* rather than *actor*. This conceptual clarity might help one to understand the main underlying problem of inactiveness of the OIC in terms of its function and action. Therefore, the recent attempts to transform the OIC are actually an attempt to define what the OIC is and what it stands for. This is as important as starting a new organization, because the OIC's problems are not solely *bureaucratic*, but also *ideological*.

In retrospect, the inter-state dispute among the OIC members has always prevented the OIC from being accepted as a respective and credible international player, even though most of the OIC members have played critical role by supplying the most needed energy, oil, to the global market. Such disagreements and disputes among the OIC members have emanated from either intra-religious issues (e.g., Sunni- Shiite) or leadership competition. Especially the strong states within the OIC, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and even Egypt have turned the OIC an arena where they sought the support of their own cause rather than the one for *ummah*.

In this regard, as Sheikh (2002:50) argues, Saudi Arabia used the OIC to *depoliticize* global Islamism in 1970s by championing and supporting the Islamic cause through the OIC. At that time, Islamic movements were on the verge of spreading and pan-Arabism was in its heyday. A Saudi-sponsored OIC, by claiming to be a supreme representative of Muslims in the world, did not only *depoliticize* global

Islamism, but also used it as a balance to pan-Arabism. Interestingly enough, since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Saudi Arabia has resorted pan-Arabism in order to prevent (and to some extent balance in global politics) Iranian exportation of Islamic revolution (Sheikh, 2003:64). Such an inclination shown by Saudi leadership has derived mostly from the seeking or surviving the leadership role of Saudi Arabia, which has gained especially through the OIC after the demise of pan-Arabism, rather than the problems of the Islamic *ummah* at large. Since the establishment of the OIC, Saudi Arabia has served as a catalyst in direction of the OIC (Esposito, 1984:108). Most of the OIC sub-organs have their headquarters in Saudi Arabia and receive major funding from the Kingdom. This has created a *de facto* leadership (or domination) of Saudi Arabia in the OIC decision-making process, turning the OIC into a permanent institution through which the Saudis could express their views and their special role in the Islamic world (Piscatori, 1983:41).

Globally, Iran has become the subject of international isolation especially after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Therefore, for Iran the OIC has become an arena where Iran could get legitimacy for its revolution against global exclusion from the international community (Sheikh, 2003:82). Moreover, Iran saw the OIC as an opportunity to present its revolution to Muslim states, which was not welcome by most of the Muslim states because of its Shiite origin. In a sense, as Sheikh (2003:67) did, one could argue that Tehran has always seen the OIC as a multilateral forum in which it could adopt unilateral postures promoted by either interest or ideology.

Egypt, another influential Muslim country, represents a different story than those of Iran and Saudi Arabia. While Egypt was the leader of pan-Arabism under the leadership of Jamal Abdul Nasser, after making peace with Israel in 1978, Camp David Accord, Egypt had become the so-called pariah of the Islamic world at large, Arab world in particular. Its influence on international Islamic politics decreased and it was even excluded from the OIC and the Arab League. Starting from this time (1978), Egypt's role as a key state has been downplayed. Therefore, even Egypt's

rejoining the OIC at the Casablanca Summit (Jan-1984) was viewed as part of Saudi Arabia's broader strategy to contain Iran, rather than Egypt's returning to its 'respectful and strong' place in the OIC and Islamic world. As a sign of this, Iran boycotted the very summit at which Egypt was re-admitted for the reasons of perceived political partiality within the OIC (Sheikh, 2003:64).

Overall, lack of common institutions, common ideology and common interests has provided structural constraints in effectiveness of the OIC in terms of reaching its economic and political means. The absence of a single benign mover-and-shaker has led to clashes and competition among the relatively strong member states. The principal policy of the OIC 'impolicy,' as Sheikh (2002:56) argues, is directly reinforced the third- party political penetration of the organization. As a result, historically, the countries that led the OIC have remained manipulated by the West (Woodward, 1997:103).

Historically, Turkey has been a special case with respect to politics in the Islamic world. A self-defined secular republic, it had been reluctant to join Islamic manifestations such as in all-Muslim conventions during the inter-war era. Since the end of World War II, however, despite its leaders' reservations about combining Islam with politics, they compromised enough to draw a line between domestic and international affairs.

Turkey has participated in the preparatory meeting of the OIC, and later in the organization as *de facto* member, since it refused – as a secular state – to ratify its charter. In the first two decades, after the OIC came to existence, Turkey had low-profile representations due to its own secular state machinery. For example, the meeting of the OIC after Al-Aqsa fire in 1967 was for heads of states, but Turkey sent its Foreign Minister I. Sabri Caglayangil, whose attitude remained cautious throughout the conference. Turkey raised objection to having the PLO represented at the conference, and opposed the idea that called for the severing relations with Israel

(Ihsanoglu, 1996:80). Lack of interest continued in the coming years and the under-secretary of the foreign ministry, instead of the minister himself, represented Turkey at the conference of foreign ministers held in Jeddah in 1968. Turkey's low-level representation at the OIC meetings continued until 1975, when, Turkey, for the first time, was represented at the foreign minister level at the sixth OIC meeting. The following year's conference, the seventh, was hosted by Turkey and held in Istanbul in 1976, representing a turning point in Turkey-OIC relationship. Turkey's role in areas other than politics increased substantially, when, upon Turkey's proposal, the conference adopted two resolutions. One in the cultural and the other in the economic field, the two OIC subsidiaries established and located in Turkey. The Research Centre for Islamic History, Art, and Culture; and the Statistical, Economic, and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries based in Istanbul and Ankara, respectively. Moreover, with the appointment of Fethi Tevetoglu as assistant secretary-general of the OIC, also in 1976, Turkey provided additional momentum in its relations with the Islamic world through the OIC.

In the first half of the 1970s, various political and economic developments paved the way for Turkey's strengthening connections with the OIC. In the political field, the Cyprus problem continued to be main problem. Turkey's need of support for its cause in Cyprus and the imposition of arms embargo by the United States after Turkey's military involvement in Cyprus in 1974 encouraged Turkey to increase its relations with the OIC. Economically, the oil boom of 1973-1974 brought a rise in oil prices that severely affected Turkey. The higher prices paid for oil exacerbated the trade deficit, which led Turkey to give priority to fostering economic and commercial relations with Middle Eastern countries (Ihsanoglu, 1996:82).

Turkey's increasing connections with the OIC continued in 1980s. In 1980, Turkish President Kenan Evren inaugurated a high-level meeting on economic cooperation, which developed guidelines and a draft plan of action to serve as the framework document for the promotion of economic cooperation among the OIC members

(Ihsanoglu, 1996:87). With the assuming of the chairmanship of the Committee for Commercial and Economic Cooperation (COMCEC), the president of Turkey signified the beginning of Ankara's coordinating role in overall economic and trade cooperation activities of the OIC in general. The OIC as the main Islamic body, as Al-Ahsan (1988:118) argued, has been more successful in fostering economic cooperation among member countries than in dealing with political issues. While Turkey was represented at prime ministry level for the first time at the 1981 OIC Summit, the fourth summit meeting of the OIC in Casablanca, Morocco in 1984, where the president of Turkey assumed chairmanship of the economic committee, was the first time Turkey was represented at the presidential level (Oran, 2003:127-128). This indeed was the sign of a turning point in Turkey's role within the OIC.

As the years pass, Turkey strengthened its ties with the OIC and started to join actively in the economic bodies of the organization. The main motives were, among others, Turkey's wish to foster closer economic ties with other Muslim states and obtain their support in its conflicts with Greece mainly over Cyprus and Bulgaria over Turkish Muslim minority in there (Landau, 1990:299).

In the 1990s, Turkey saw its position undergo considerable change. While at the beginning of the 1990s Turkey assumed important role in mobilizing OIC toward the Bosnian issue,² it also increased its role as coordinator in economic affairs. In the second half of the 1990s, Turkey relations with the OIC were ambiguous because of its domestic politics. When Turkey rapidly developed its relations with Israel, at the same time, Ankara sought to develop ties with Islamic world, especially under Erbakan's premiership. Although the Erbakan government was short-lived, increasing Turkey-Israeli ties at that time had a major impact on Turkey's relations with the Islamic countries at large. Turkish-Israeli alliance had been seen by Islamic world, especially by the Middle Eastern countries, as against them and was condemned by

² For example, in 1992, Turkey hosted an extraordinary meeting of OIC Foreign Ministers to discuss the Bosnian war and its consequences.

most of the Middle Eastern states. This had also repercussions in Turkey-OIC relations. In that regard, the OIC summit meeting in Tehran, Iran in 1997, with the leading role of Syria and some other Arab countries, adopted a decision that was critical Turkey's relations with Israel. Consequently, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel found himself having to leave the summit prematurely (Kirisci, 2004:40).

On the eve of the 21st century, Turkey was about to leave its long decade of instability in government and domestic politics. After Ismail Cem became Foreign Minister in 1997 and onwards in several governments, Turkey initiated a process of correction or reorientation of its foreign policy toward the Islamic world in general and to the Middle East in particular. As part of such endeavor, Turkey organized the first ever OIC-EU foreign ministers meeting under the 'Civilizational Harmony' in Istanbul in 2001, and participated in the OIC Secretary-General election actively by proposing Yasar Yakis as a candidate. Although, Yakis received little support from the OIC members, it 'highlighted significant change of orientation in Turkish foreign policy' toward the Middle East and Islamic world (Kosebalaban, 2002:144).

Turkey's foreign policy and domestic policy are so interlinked that any opening up policy toward the Islamic world brings a crisis of legitimacy. This is especially the case when the opening up was directed towards a political dimension rather than an economic one. If an Islamic-oriented party is in power in Turkey and wants to develop Ankara's relations with Islamic world, it creates a legitimacy crisis in the eyes of both the West and historically Turkey's laic/secular domestic constituencies, as to whether the ruling party has a hidden agenda, such as Islamization. However, when another party other than an Islamist one is in power, Turkey faces legitimacy crisis in the eyes of the Middle Eastern/Islamic countries. In such cases, they tend to see Turkey as an 'agent' of the West and approach Turkey's proposals cautiously. In any case, as Karaosmanoglu (1984:116) puts aptly, Islam as a trans-national ensemble links domestic legitimacy with international politics positively or negatively.

In between such a dilemma, after the AKP came to power in 2002, Turkey has developed a kind of relations with the OIC that could be regarded as a new period in Turkey-Middle East and Turkey's role in Islamic institutions. After the AKP, there was an overall reconstruction of Turkish foreign policy; not only did Turkey start to enter negotiations with the EU, but it also gained legitimacy and support from the Middle Eastern countries. This was in spite of the fact that, historically, there was a tendency to see Turkey's relations with the West and the East (Middle East, Islamic world and third world in general) as contradictory elements and alternatives to each others. During the AKP period, Turkey has been able to compliment its relations with the East and the West, rather than seeing them as competing elements. As the then Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul (14 May 2004, *Zaman*) announced before the 31st meeting of the Islam Foreign Ministers Conference in May 2004, Turkey has placed 'special importance on its relations with the Islamic world', and is trying 'to get the OIC to take its deserved place in international arena and to transform it into a more effective and dynamic structure.' In this spirit, Turkey proposed Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu as its candidate for the OIC Secretary-General in 2004 meeting. With the election of Ihsanoglu as the OIC Secretary-General, for the first time, Turkey had upgraded its role in the OIC structure to the utmost degree. Afterwards, it initiated a reconstruction process within the organization to transform it from 'organized irrelevance' (Beng, 27 Feb 2003, *Asia Times*) to a 'more effective and dynamic' one. Even though, Turkey's call for reconstruction of the OIC could be traced when then Foreign Minister Gul stressed the need for Muslim countries to democratize and pay greater attention to human and women rights in Tehran. In May 2003, this started to be realized after the Turkish candidate won the election. Gul's call for 'to put our house in order first' in Tehran received acclamation and support from Muslim countries.

Regarding the transformation of the OIC, Secretary-General appointed a group of experts in 2005 proposing a recommendation to transform the organization in a globalizing world and to restructure in order to cope with the new challenges the Muslim

world faces. Eminent Group advised that among others the charter should be amended, the power of the Secretary-General is to be increased within the organization and the OIC is to be activated in global affairs. These recommendations were tabled at OIC Summit in 2005 and accepted by the Head of States. Currently, the changing of the charter is still under discussion and a group of ex-presidents are coming together to discuss the ways to change the OIC Charter.

When the OIC was established, all of Turkey's reservations concerned the appropriateness of the participation of a constitutionally secular nation in a body emphasizing Islam and Muslim solidarity. As the years passed, Turkey's hard secular side softened in its foreign policy and Ankara has begun to look for ways to develop economic relations with the Islamic world. Turkey's economic imperatives, coupled with the Cyprus issue, led Turkey to assume a leadership role in economic field within the OIC structure. However, in the political field, Turkey was cautious to play a leading role in Islamic world because of its stated secular establishment. In line with the overall transformation in Turkish foreign policy toward the Islamic world since the AKP assumed the power in 2002, Turkey has also diversified its traditionally leading role in economic affairs by adding the political one within the OIC. Although, it is still early to say whether this developing of relations will be long-term in nature, Turkey's search for a balancing and also active role in European and the Middle Eastern affairs is a new trend that deserves attention because of its potential and possible results for Turkey and the Middle East in the long run.

2- Turkey and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is a regional intergovernmental organization consisting of ten member states: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. It is the successor organization to the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), which was established in 1964 by the triumvirate of Iran, Turkey and Pakistan, then in concert as front-line states against the threat of Soviet

communism with the banner of Baghdad Pact, later re-named as Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). The RCD remained active until 1979, when the Islamic revolution took place in Iran. After the revolution, Iran showed indifference to the RCD and regarded it as a brainchild of the Shah regime. However, in the light of its continued relevance and utility, it was resurrected. At the ministerial meeting in Islamabad in June 1990, the Izmir Treaty, signed as the framework for the RCD in 1977, was modified to provide a proper legal framework for the transition from RCD to ECO. Following the ratification of the new charter 1991, the transition was completed.

It is often stated that the founding of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in March 1964 accelerated the momentum for regional cooperation in Asia and the Middle East (Kraner, 1985). Notwithstanding their geographical proximity, the leaders of Iran, Turkey and Pakistan decided to heed the UNCTAD regionalist approach to development by creating the RCD in their 1964 Istanbul Declaration. In the Declaration they called for free trade, tariff reduction, joint ventures, technical cooperation and cultural exchange. However, in the bipolar context of the Cold War, the RCD states were initially forced to keep the organization afloat without institutionalizing it. Thus, the RCD turned out to be a loose form of *ad hoc* intergovernmental cooperation lagging in terms of attention, staffing, and resources.

By the middle and late 1970s, East-West détente set the stage for a reinvigorated approach toward the RCD. This showed by the member states by signing the Izmir Treaty (1977) that contained the RCD charter, whose main points were, among many others, a free trade zone, gradual reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers, investment bank for regional cooperation, a regional insurance company and a shipping line. The Izmir Treaty was also established seven technical committees and reorganized the secretariat (Afrasiabi and Jalali, 2001:65). Although this new initiative was meant to close the gap between the RCD's lofty objectives and its actual perform-

ance in the 1960s and 1970s, in terms of promoting interregional trade among the members, the RCD was a dismal failure. For example, by the late 1970s, trade among the members accounted for less than three percent of their total foreign trade volume (Hashemi, 1979).

During the 1980s, the RCD remained dormant and inactive. It was also a ‘bazaar’ rather than a ‘bloc’ (Salamat, 1991:26). This was mainly due to the turmoil of the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979), the subsequent war between Iran and Iraq (1980-1988), and the military coup in Turkey in 1980. Unsurprisingly, regional mistrust, tension, and conflict replaced the impetus for regional cooperation. The post-revolutionary regime in Iran was initially more interested in the idea of exporting revolution to its neighbors than cooperating with their regimes and it was also unwilling to accord legitimacy to any foreign initiatives of its predecessor such as RCD. Therefore, the RCD replaced by the new organization called ECO in 1985. At the time, Iran was still inclined to use the ECO for exporting its transnational revolution. This alienated Turkey and Pakistan and the ECO left inactive. However, with the election of Ali Akbar Rafsanjani to the presidency (1989-1997) in Iran, regionalism began to assume prominence in Iranian foreign policy (Herzig, 2004:504). This significant change in foreign policy of Iran inevitably brought their attention to the ECO. First, at the Islamabad conference in 1991, they agreed that ECO summit should be upgraded above semi-annual sessions at the sub-ministerial level. Secondly, the emergence of several independent republics in the Central Asia-Caucasus region from the ashes of the Soviet Union opened up an unprecedented opportunity to expand ECO and thus transform it from small trilateral organization to a major regional player. At the 1992 Tehran ECO summit, the six Muslim former Soviet republics, namely Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan with Afghanistan joined the three original members.

By expanding, the ‘new’ ECO achieved an exceptional growth, covering a vast geographical area inhabited by more than 300 million people. The ‘new’ ECO region

encompasses one of the richest parts of the world in oil, gas, and mineral resources. It has also considerable agricultural potential with vast irrigation networks and steppes accommodating both livestock and grain production. Moreover, ECO includes two of the world's leading cotton producers, Uzbekistan and Pakistan, which are together account for about a third of the world's total production.

With the ECO's expansion, revising its charter necessitated and thus the New Izmir Treaty was ratified in Ashgabat in 1996. The new treaty took the earlier attempt of regional cooperation one step further and specified four important areas for cooperation, namely trade, transportation, communication and energy. As Afrasiabi and Jalali (2001:69) also notes, the new treaty was already strengthened by several previous agreements and plans in order to implement its objectives. These are, among others, the Quetta Plan of Action, the Istanbul Declaration of ECO's Long-Term prospects, the Almaty Outline Plan for the Development of Transport Sector, and the ECO Transit Trade Agreement. The Quetta Plan of Action, adopted in Quetta, Pakistan in February 1993, called for standardization of commodities, a multilateral payments mechanism, and joint cooperation for freer access to the world market for ECO countries' raw materials and manufactured exports; all of which are critical for economic integration among the members (Rashid 1993:19). While, the Almaty Plan, adopted in October 1993, focused on bilateral and multilateral strategies to expand transportation and communication among the ECO states; the Istanbul Declaration on ECO's Long-Term prospects (July 1993) envisioned future cooperation on energy issues.

Above all, an important body within the ECO for regional integration is the ECO Trade and Development Bank that was established at the third ECO summit in Islamabad in 1995 by Iran, Turkey and Pakistan. According to the agreement, the purpose of the bank is to provide financial facilities for the expansion of trade and economic development in the member states. Importantly, the agreement's envisioning of an eventual ECO currency, called ECO units (eu), indicates seriousness among

the members for integration. Moreover, the decision to create a Free Trade Zone until 2015 at Heads of State and Governments summit in Dushanbe, September 2004, has also indicated willingness from ECO members to this end (Sen, 2005:183). Besides the creating a common currency, the ECO states initiated many projects that are related to integration directly. ECO Air, ECO Shipping, ECO Chamber of Commerce, and Cultural and Educational institutions are just to mention a few.

In contrast to these ambitious and huge projects and plans, the ECO members have experienced a low level of trade among each other. To encourage greater trade among the ECO states, efforts have mainly focused on gradually eliminating tariffs and freeing the flow of capital among member states. To reach this end, focus has been the harmonizing customs rules, establishing free trade zones and border markets, trade exhibitions, information networking, eliminating double taxation, and supporting funds for ECO projects; all of which, however, has helped little for integration in the area so far. Nevertheless, there have been some major accomplishments that need to be mentioned. Signing a preferential tariff agreement by Iran, Turkey and Pakistan in 1991, which calls for a 10 percent tariff reduction on some sixty-six commodities, is being implemented as a first step toward the eventual elimination of trade barriers in the region (Ozar, 1997). In addition, the entering into force of a trade facilitation agreement in 1998 to address various transit issues, such as training and capacity building as well to simplify transit procedures, is worth to mention because the both agreements would set an example for implementing deepening projects.

It is often stated that a major difference between ECO and other regional groupings is the poorly developed transport network within the ECO (Pomfret, 1997; and Sen, 2005). ECO is an organization in which the seven members are all landlocked countries and weak transport linkages with each other and the rest of the world.³ Moreover, historically these countries' road and railway networks were constructed

³ Azerbaijan, Afghanistan and the five Central Asian members.

with a northward orientation, towards Russia and Ukraine, while the three regional members' transport networks were directed away from Russia and Ukraine.⁴ High transit fees because of poor transportation have also hampered interstate trade in the ECO region. Bearing all these facts in mind, an essential step towards promoting intra-ECO trade is to improve the transport links among the members. The ten ECO countries spread over 7 million square kilometers. Covering such a vast area makes it difficult to reach easy solutions for transportation and requires some regional planning and coordination that needs the support of all members.

ECO's Ashgabat Declaration of 1997 called for the formation of a permanent commission to deal with infrastructure improvement and transportation development that would make ECO goods easily exportable via shipping hubs in Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. Subsequently, ECO established a program of action for the period 1998-2007. The program outlines twelve objectives to stimulate and facilitates the movement of goods from landlocked regions to existing ports. Among the program's objectives are the construction of a trans-Asian railway, the development of an interstate fiber-optic telecommunication system and the establishment of a common postal area. Although in the area of railway development some progress has been achieved,⁵ most of the projects are pending because of political instability in the area. The ongoing reconstructing process in Afghanistan after the war and the war on terrorism are the main sources of instability and preventing to implement ECO projects.

The ECO region is often described as an oil and gas region even though two of the member states, Turkey and Pakistan, are without significant oil and gas deposits. And both are heavily dependent on imported oil. This is one area where ECO countries can come together and be effective. Aware of this powerful area, at the ECO Heads of State and Governments Summit in June 2000, they expressed a desire to

⁴ Turkey, Iran and Pakistan.

⁵ For example, the Tejen-Seraks-Mashhad railway, linking Iran and Turkmenistan inaugurated in 1996, increases the access of Central Asian states to the ports of Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea

expand cooperation in energy sphere. ECO was already involved directly in the issue of energy transit when they set up a high-level expert task force, which met first in Turkmenistan in 1997. While meeting regularly, this high-level expert task force prepared a report about possible oil and gas pipeline routes that was accepted by ECO 1999 Islamabad meeting. Moreover, ECO encouraged its members to be helpful in publishing data about ECO energy resources to produce an energy data booklet. Turkey was the first to do so and asked other ECO member states to cooperate in updating information. Despite the efforts in cooperating in energy, ECO has registered failure so far due to several reasons. Of most important is the intensive involvement of outsiders to the issue, such as the US, international oil companies etc. The internal conflict or competition between the member states has become an obstacle to integration process, not least in the energy. The differences in governments' priorities and inclinations coupled with their different foreign policy orientations have turned ECO an ineffective organization.

Although it has a long historical background, the expanded ECO is a relatively new regional organization. The ECO has long way to go in pursuit of its various objectives and projects. However, rather than an overall assessment, some preliminary comments can be made in conclusion especially regarding the obstacles and opportunities in the ECO area. Within this structure Turkey's role can be well evaluated. First of all, ECO region can be fairly characterized as a turbulent environment. A plethora of insurgencies, attempted (successful or unsuccessful) coups, interstate conflicts, and geopolitical competition (between Turkey and Iran) have marred the overall stability of the ECO region during the past decade or so (Sen, 2005:192). Most importantly, the ousting of Taliban from power in Afghanistan and subsequent developments has brought more instability to the area. Second, ECO is hampered by the proliferation of a number of other regional groupings (Afrasiabi and Jalali, 2001:78). The Confederation of Independent States, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Zone, the Eurasia Economic Unit, and the GUUAM Group are the first to come to mind. As a principal member, Turkey's seeking the European Union

membership is, however, sometimes led Turkey to pay scarce attention to ECO. The more organizations exist in the same area, the unlikely the members pay more and coherent attention to the one, because overlapping membership many organization. Third, the prospects for intra-regional trade on the basis of ECO members' current export bundles are limited (Pomfret, 1997:661). They have a fairly narrow base of export competitiveness, concentrated on primary products or textile and clothing. For example, the exports of Iran and Turkmenistan are dominated by oil and natural gas, while Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan also rest on exploitation of their large oil reserves in medium-term prospect. By the same token, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have minerals to be used commercially. Among the members, Turkey has the most diversified exports, and could exchange manufactured goods for primary products from the ECO members. To some extent, these three reasons account for slow process of ECO's integration. Nevertheless, these elements may make the ECO weak in intra-regional trade relations but strong in interregional one.

The success of regional integration does not only depend on its ability to promote intra-trade relations among member states. The compatibility of region in global market is also an important indicator of its success. As mentioned above, the prospects of intra-regional trade is limited among the ECO members. It would be better if the ECO could look for ways to exert its influence in inter-regional trade, since the ECO region has the oil and gas reserves that is give huge advantage to them in global economic relations. In addition, as Pomfret (1997:661) argued, the ECO members could focus on niche opportunities. In general, their economies are too similar in their dependence on a limited range of primary products to offer great gains from intra-ECO trade, if it is coordinated among the members to which product mainly to focus.

In the ECO region, there are two key members that can navigate the organization: Turkey and Iran. Turkey's influence might be felt more because the expansion of ECO toward new Central Asian republics after the collapse of USSR, where Turkey

have more influence on them due to language, cultural and religious ties. The ECO is the only organization that Turkey shares membership with the Turkic republics. Therefore, after the expansion of the ECO, Turkey has paid more attention to ECO and looked the ways to use it effectively, because Turkey wanted to use ECO as one of the ways to exert its influence on Turkic republics through ECO. However, Turkey's unbalanced and incoherent relations with Iran (especially in the second half of 1990) have become an obstacle in its venture rather than complimentary. Turkey's relations with Turkic republics and that of Turkey with Iran are so interlinked that without analyzing it together, it would not be appropriate to understand Turkey role in ECO. Therefore, for Turkey to play a key role in ECO, these two elements must be taken consistently and carefully.

In the post-Cold War environment, Iran and Turkey have been engaged a mixed-motive game of simultaneous cooperation and conflict; the ECO served their mutual interests to offset their geopolitical competition with each other by selective cooperation through the multilateral arms of ECO. Within the ECO structure, despite impressive projects on the paper, the projects that Turkey and Iran cooperated became effective and useful. However, the projects that did not get support of Turkey or/and Iran were left only on paper. Turkey's political and bilateral trade relations with Iran have increased in last a couple of years. While Turkey's export to Iran was \$534 million in 2003, the number has jumped to \$810 million in 2004, with an incredible increase of 51.8 percent (Sen, 2005:187). This increasing development of relations between the two core members, if continues, is critical for deeper integration in ECO area as well as Turkey's possible increasing role in ECO along with Iran.

Historically, Turkey has enjoyed having a good relationship with the other influential members of the ECO, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Due to geographical distance, Turkey's trade relations with the two have always been less than expected. However, especially Turkish reconstruction companies have expanded recently their business deals toward the two countries that might trigger trade between Turkey and them.

According to Turkish Contractors Union, Turkish companies have signed contracts in rebuilding roads and developing infrastructure that exceeds more than \$1.3 billion (quoted in Sen, 2005:188).

All in all, Turkey's influence on ECO as regional economic integration project has been limited due to several reasons as explained above. However, with the developments of Turkey's relations with the ECO members, it could be a useful organization if only the members would not victimize ECO projects to their bilateral relations and domestic politics for regional integration.

3- Turkey and the Developing Eight (D-8)

The D-8 was founded among eight prominent Muslim countries, namely Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Egypt, and Nigeria on 15 June 1997. The main architect of the D-8 was Necmettin Erbakan, who served as Turkey's prime minister in 1996-1997. The idea of establishing such an organization that brings 'key' countries from Islamic world gripped during Erbakan's visits to some Muslim countries in Africa and Asia as prime minister in 1996. The members of D-8 have three main characteristics in general: first, they are part of developing world; second, Islam constitutes an overwhelming majority of the people in member countries (Aral, 2005:89) with the exception of Nigeria. Lastly, the members of D-8 could be defined as pivotal middle powers meaning that they have strong influence not only in their regions but also their policies are beyond their regions (Ozkan, 2006a and 2007).

Before one goes through details of the D-8, it is necessary to understand the environment in which D-8 grouping came to existence. Especially in the post-Cold War era, Muslims have increasingly felt isolated from global economic and political decision-making process. Despite constituting one fourth of global population, no Muslim state has representation in the United Nation Security Council- the main global body- with a veto power. Indifference of international community against

killing of Muslims especially in Bosnia and Kosovo convinced the Muslims in a way that they have no trust in international community or international organizations. In addition, the double standard of international community against Muslims, such as while criticizing Pakistan having nuclear weapons, not to criticize Israel and India, has also contributed in developing such an excluded feeling among Muslim masses. In the early period of the post-Cold War era, Islam (and Muslims) has experienced a 'geopolitical exclusion' from global politics and Muslims have lost their trust in international community/organizations as a 'neutral problem solver' (Falk, 1997; and Davutoglu, 1994:104).

Having depicted the environment in which D-8 was founded, it can be argued that D-8 grouping was a response by Muslim countries against this global exclusion and an attempt to have their voice being heard. Against economic and political marginalization from international community, D-8 sought to develop economic relations among the key Muslim states. As globalization shrinking, in order not to be marginalized not least economically, D-8 countries found it necessary to cooperate extensively in the economic, commercial and financial fronts. D-8 countries in a way or other represent the 'core' of the Islamic countries, which represented by Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). With the exception of Saudi Arabia, all D-8 member countries are the mover and shakers of the Islamic world. As Aral (2005:91) indicates, the data show that when D-8 was founded in 1997, its members had a share of 54 percent of the total exports and 55 percent of the total imports realized by Muslim countries. The total GDP of D-8 member states constituted nearly 60 percent of the total GDP of the OIC countries at the time. The total population of the D-8 countries was nearly 800 million, which meant that they made up about 65 percent of the overall population in the Islamic world. This corresponds to some 13.5 percent of the world population. Mainly due to rapid growth in the past, a large part of their population are and will continue to be young for the foreseeable future, constituting a factor of dynamism in D-8 countries.

It can also be argued that there are two main features at the time that affected the character of D-8 grouping. First of all, the ‘urgency’ to respond deteriorating global conditions against Muslims played a crucial role in ‘fastening the process.’ This led the initiative to be weak at the later stage, because the necessary political and economic strategic planning has not done properly. This feature can also be found in the foreign policy approach of the Refah (Welfare) Party- then ruling party in Turkey- toward the Islamic world. Though Refah was in power only eleven months, with its leader Erbakan, it initiated and orchestrated huge projects such as the D-8. The second element that played a crucial role when establishing the D-8 was decreasing or eliminating bureaucracy, if possible. As Aral (2005:91) notes, the founders of the D-8 were aware of the dangers of proper functioning of Islamic organizations mainly the OIC, which comes from too much bureaucracy and outside intervention. The D-8 grouping wanted to overcome these obstacles while revitalizing a small but strong group of Islamic countries. In a larger analysis it was to serve revitalize Muslim world and thus participate global politics, economically and politically.

After the inaugural summit of the D-8 grouping on 15 June 1997, the Istanbul Declaration identified the principles on which this cooperation ought to be based. The D-8 leaders ‘declare [d that] the main objective of D-8 was to be socio-economic development in accordance with the following principles: *peace* instead of conflict; *dialogue* instead of confrontation; *co-operation* instead of exploitation; *justice* instead of double-standards; *equality* instead of discrimination; *democracy* instead of oppression.’ In the same declaration, the D-8 countries also identified the main goals and principal areas of cooperation among the members. These are mainly among others ‘trade, industry, finance, banking and privatization, rural development energy, agriculture, science and technology’ (Alan, 2001: 211-212).

The priorities of the members in participating in any organization are as critical as the common aim of the organization. If each member’s motivations stem from different considerations and those considerations cannot be articulated through a ‘com-

mon channel,' the chances of success of such organizations are less. In other words, the means should be coherent with the ends. From the beginning, the D-8 grouping faced such a dilemma that made the grouping 'ineffective'. As Aral (2005:97) aptly argues, at the time when the D-8 came to existence, the motivations and goals of each member did not represent a united front with clear, well-defined and unified objectives. Rather than representing the general view of the founding members, each had its own reason to take part in this grouping driving largely from domestic consideration. This accounts for a couple of reasons. Of most important was that each member states has had different reasons to join the grouping, and through the D-8, aimed at achieving different aims. To mention a few, Nigeria and Iran were trying to break isolation against them in international forums. Nigeria was then ruled by a military government and was more or less ostracized by the international community (Landsberg, 2000). By the same token, Iran due to America's 'dual containment' policy was also ostracized (Sick, 1998). They hoped that the D-8 would thus give a modicum of recognition to the both regime, at least in respect of the Islamic world.

Against this backdrop, although it was possibly looked upon by many as the incipient model of a future 'Islamic common market' on account of pronounced goal of economic cooperation and deepening trade ties, Aral (2005:98) rightly argues in his well-researched article that the D-8 was not designed specifically to constitute the nucleus of a future 'Islamic common market' or 'Muslim custom union.' Rather, it aimed at enhancing economic relations among Muslim developing countries. From the beginning, the founders of the D-8 avoided any resort to terminology of an emerging bloc that would challenge existing international norms and institutions. Instead, they turned their attention to economics and trade among themselves. Because of this nature, some tends to argue that the D-8 resembles the group of Non-Aligned Nations because of their emphasis on fair trade, economic cooperation among member states, justice and freedom (Aral, 2005:98).

The summit meetings held since 1997, from Dhaka (1999) and Cairo (2001) to Tehran (2004) Summits of Head of States and Governments have discussed the failures rather than successes.⁶ They have discussed the global economic, financial and trading system and criticized them for their injustice natures; however, they failed to consider special needs of developing world. This is because some circles (especially pro-Zionist lobbies) in the west and in particular in the US, expressed outright hostility to the D-8 which, in their view, was unacceptably antagonistic towards the West. They blamed the D-8 grouping for harboring 'fundamentalist and anti-western' ambitions (Makovsky, 1997). Such an existing global environment towards the D-8 made the grouping more cautious and their criticism of the prevailing economic and financial system and call for action were not couched in the confrontational language. Because, any language that used by D-8 against prevailing economic order was smacked as anti-westernism.

Under this condition that has become like the sword of Damocles, the D-8 seems to have been unable to deliver its promises. Moreover, internally, the setting up of the D-8 eventually became the long-sought-for evidence to oust Erbakan (Kaplan, 18 November 2006, *Yeni Safak*), the main driving force behind the D-8 grouping,⁷ from the government in Turkey, because of his Islamist and anti-western leanings. The D-8 initiative, mainly because of domestic contingencies of Turkey and the fear of political Islam, is regarded as a 'beginning of an alternative foreign policy based on Muslim solidarity' (Robins, 2003:562). His fall from power only a few months after the founding of D-8 through a 'post-modern coup' meant that the D-8 grouping had to proceed in the absence of its architect. Even some of foreign ministers emphasized the role of Erbakan and Turkey and they argued that the D-8 would not move forward effectively without Erbakan as prime minister (Al-Ahram Weekly, 15-21 February 2001).

⁶ For a detailed discussion of these meetings see Tastekin, 2006.

⁷ It was well stated in many expressions. For example, 'The formation of D-8 is the symbol of Erbakan's vision' see Alan, 2001:180.

Above all, domestic instability and turmoil in most of the member states victimized the D-8 grouping from the beginning as a project because it was located at the centre of domestic politics (Davutoglu, 2001:201). After Turkish Prime Minister Erbakan was ousted from power and then, from politics altogether, similar domestic problems occurred in the others. The then deputy prime minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim was put in prison on a myriad of charges, only to be released in 2004. Nawaz Sharif, the prime minister of Pakistan was likewise toppled by a military coup and President Suharto of Indonesia was forced to step down through a combination of domestic opposition and international pressure. Turkey and Malaysia have also been struck by devastating economic and financial crisis in the last five years that has been blamed on the poor performing of their economics. Nonetheless, there have also been good developments in the member states. For instance, Nigeria's transition to democracy and the existence of Iran's more balanced foreign policy instead of purely anti-western stand with the election of Mohammed Khatami are just two examples. However, these developments were unable to produce good results for the aim of the D-8 grouping because the turmoil in aforementioned countries was so apparent as to dominate D-8 agenda.

In spite of all talk about deepening co-operation and preferential trade arrangements, the intra-trade among D-8 member states has not increased significantly. The extent of industrial and agricultural cooperation has remained well below that expected. According to the Commission that prepared the report for the 4th Summit of the D-8 held in Tehran on 17-18 February 2004, intra-trade among the D-8 member states constituted a very small fraction of its overall trade with the rest of the world - despite showing an increase of about 50 percent between 1999-2002, \$21.3 billion out of the \$500 billion trade margin realized among the D-8 members (Aral, 2005:102). These statistics, in comparison to the trade indicators that the members conduct with their other partners, represent only a very small portion.

In addition to economic cooperation, it was initially expected by the founders and supporters alike that the D-8 would eventually extend its range of activities 'to cover cultural, social, political and even military cooperation in future' (Ozfatura, 1997). This has not, however, materialized in any significant way due to the same reasons as for the economic one.

From the Turkish foreign policy perspective, the setting up of the D-8 contained two elements that were also part of the foreign policy priorities of the then ruling party in Turkey, Refah Party. First, through this grouping, Turkey sought to restore its long-neglected ties with the Islamic world. In addition, for Refah Party and its leader Erbakan, it would demonstrate their commitment to the unity of Muslims worldwide. Moreover, this initiative would spell out the conviction that Turkey should assign itself the role of leadership and a catalyst in bringing Muslim nations together in developing Muslim world. Second, Turkey's desire to find new markets for Turkish exports was equally important (White, 1997:27). To widen the economic horizons thoroughly by developing relations the countries from Asia and Africa was not an alternative to the existing the Custom Union agreement with the EU. Instead, it was hoped that it would give leverage power to Turkey's relations with Europe. Erbakan believed that the more Turkey had deep relations with the eastern part of the world, the more Turkey would be powerful in EU-Turkey relations.

As mentioned in the earlier sections, Turkish foreign policy has expanded toward its immediate regions and has looked for new opportunities. The D-8 grouping, in that regard, was to open up Turkey to Africa and East Asia. Egypt and Nigeria are the gateways to north and central Africa, respectively, as is Indonesia and Malaysia in East Asia. The latter two were then experiencing a vibrant economic growth in Asia along with the other 'Asian Tigers.' In an unbiased view, Turkey could have developed its relations under the D-8 umbrella with these two long-neglected areas, namely Africa and East Asia (Davutoglu, 2001:282).

In retrospect, a view from today to the place of the D-8 grouping within Turkish foreign policy strategies shows that the D-8 has not (and still has not) *rationalized* as a development project, but has been victimized in a sense of *emotional* domestic policy context in relations to debate of secularist-Islamist cul-de-sac.

CONCLUSION

After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Ankara was not eager to develop its relations with the Islamic world, simply because the new republic was based on secularism and religion could not be base for any of its relations with the outside world. Modernization and westernization has been the main targets and Islamic world is usually seen as underdeveloped, pre-modernist and religious based. This perception of Turkish foreign policy, by and large, defined Turkey's approach to international organizations within the Islamic world too. Until the economic needs came to fore after 1980s, Turkey was still reluctant to develop any serious relations with the Islamic world. However, thanks to opening of Turkey to global market and international foray, Ankara looked the ways to develop its relations with the Islamic countries in terms of economics. Ending of the Cold War in 1990 has also contributed Ankara's opening up plans and furthered the process unwittingly.

After the Cold War, Turkey has experienced three waves of activism toward the Islamic world in general and to the Middle East in particular (Ozkan, 2006b). First was when Turkey opted to play active role in 1991 Gulf War by cutting pipelines and supporting the US-led international coalition. While it was a drastic change in Turkey's classical approach to the Middle East, it ushered in a new era in Turkey-Middle East relations. The second wave took place when the Welfare Party came to power in 1996-7. The Welfare Party government initiated an economic grouping among strong Muslim nations and sought the ways to develop relations with Islamic world. Although his short-lived government did not allow for realization of many projects, Erbakan as premier opened Turkey to the Islamic world. This was a quick and shocking wave for the secular establishment in Turkey, which resulted in the

ousting of Erbakan from power through a bloodless military coup in 1997. The third wave is different than the ones took place before. This one, unlike the first and second waves, which were reactive in nature, has been proactive.

Turkey's relations with institutions in the Islamic world have simply been the repercussion of Ankara's general approach to Islamic world and the Middle East. Turkey's relations with the OIC show this parallelism clearly. Turkey could only take the OIC within its foreign policy framework more seriously after the 1980s and more actively after 2000. A similar trend can also be observed with regard to ECO. Although it has a long history, Turkey-OIC relations have been the consequence of Turkey-Iran and Turkey-Pakistan relations. Especially Ankara-Tehran relations have defined the role, scope and the influence of the ECO in global politics. Needless to say, Turkey's Iranian policy was directly influenced by the Ankara's overall approach to Islamic world. Turkey's relations with the D-8 are different than with the other two organizations, simply because the D-8 was initiated by Turkey and it has been the sign of a leadership role for Turkey in the Islamic world. As Kaplan (18 November 2006, *Yeni Safak*) argues, the D-8 was a project that was created outside of classical Turkey's westernism paradigm and was even initially rejected by internal and external constituencies. Under this shadow, Turkey's activism and role within the D-8 has been subject to domestic debate over the secularism-Islamism clash. After the initial enthusiasm while Erbakan in power, the D-8 is treated as if it is never existed. Even though after the AKP came to power, when Turkey tried to have a balanced foreign policy toward the Islamic world, the D-8 was unable to any attention. This alone shows the sensitivity of the D-8 issue in Turkey, because it was not seen as a development project but an Islamist project.

In Turkish foreign policy, seeking EU membership strongly and controlling the OIC Secretary-General at the same time is taking place for first time in history. Traditionally, having relations with Islamic countries and the West is seen as contradictory and as alternatives to each other. Although it is still early to judge, the AKP

government has been trying to create a balance, which might open a completely new chapter in Turkey's domestic and foreign policy discourse with an important implication on Ankara's foreign policy towards the Islamic world and Islamic institutions.

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