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**LA PROIEZIONE CENTRO-ASIATICA  
E CAUCASICA DELLA TURCHIA.  
RICADUTE IN MATERIA DI SICUREZZA  
REGIONALE E COLLETTIVA**

# *Sommario*

## PARTE PRIMA

### LE COMPONENTI STRUTTURALI DEL SISTEMA TURCHIA

- Executive Summary (prof. Valeria Piacentini Fiorani) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
1. Contents and line of research. .... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  2. Order and new Disorder within the Turkish strategic thought..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  3. Turkey, the Eurasian context and the EU - Aims of this research. ... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  4. The Middle Eastern quadrant, Iran and the Gulf ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  5. Methodological approach..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
- Presentazione della Ricerca (Valeria Piacentini Fiorani) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
1. Le componenti strutturali del sistema-Turchia ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  2. Le proiezioni turche nella regione Eurasiatica (Asiatica-Centroasiatica e Anatolico-Caucasica) e nella regione del Golfo (dimensione araba). Le Corrispondenze..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  3. Approccio metodologico..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

INTRODUZIONE La dimensione regionale della Turchia La National Security Strategy vs. l'Asia e l'Europa. La new "strategic exposure" della Turchia: pensiero strategico turco e percezioni in materia di minacce e rischi alla sicurezza e al territorio nazionale (Valeria Piacentini Fiorani)

- ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
1. Stati Uniti, Asia ed Europa ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  2. La strategic exposure della Turchia ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  3. La dottrina strategica turca e la percezione turca di minaccia (threat) e rischio (risk). **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
1. Turchismo – Una dimensione etnico-culturale Proiezioni e potenzialità strategiche (Valeria Piacentini Fiorani)..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
    1. L'annullamento delle distanze: Turchismo e Islam ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
    2. Proiezioni e potenzialità tattico-strategiche alle soglie del terzo millennio..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
    3. Ethnos turco ed Eurasia..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
    4. Ma chi erano dunque – e chi sono in realtà – i Turchi? .... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
    5. Gruppi principali. Dati quantitativi..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
    6. Dati storici. Linee tendenziali di evoluzione ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  2. Il fattore Islam Tra mondo tradizionale e sistema moderno (Valeria Piacentini Fiorani) **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

Premessa : Islam – modello di vita ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

    1. L'Islam turco: sue specificità, parametri, e potenzialità tattico-strategiche fra mondo tradizionale e sistema moderno ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
    2. Islam - Socialismo..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
    3. Islam - Democrazia ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
    4. Modelli di organizzazioni turche in Europa..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

## Appendice

Concetto di cittadinanza – Territorio, confini e minoranze non turche all'interno della Repubblica Turca (Valeria Piacentini Fiorani - Nicola Melis / Università di Cagliari) **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

- 1..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  2. Il principio di cittadinanza e la nascita della Repubblica di Turchia (29 ottobre 1923) **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  3. Le minoranze storicamente riconosciute..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  4. Le minoranze non riconosciute ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  5. Altre minoranze..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
3. Il militare ed il suo ruolo (Michele Brunelli)..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
1. Il contesto storico-politico..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  2. Il contesto socio-culturale: i militari come espressione del turchismo tradizionale ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  3. La struttura delle Forze Armate turche ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  4. L'influenza e l'impatto dei militari sulla politica ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  5. I militari turchi e l'Unione Europea: attori e fattori ostativi il processo di integrazione.. **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

## PARTE SECONDA

### LE PROIEZIONI REGIONALI DI ANKARA NELL'ORDO MILITARIS TURCO

1. L'ordo militaris turco: l'economia della difesa e le determinanti delle spesa militare e la sua industria bellica (Michele Brunelli) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
1. Le spese militari della Turchia: una analisi storica..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  2. Le determinanti della spesa militare turca ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  3. Il ruolo dei Militari e il bilancio della difesa: una determinante essenziale nella vita politica turca..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  4. Conclusioni ed ipotesi finali ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

## Appendice

Il compasso delle relazioni estere di Ankara. Regione asiatica-eurasiatica: Centroasia e Caucaso, Federazione Russa, Afghanistan; la Repubblica Islamica dell'Iran: costanti e divergenze; la Regione "Mediterranea" (sponda araba e Medio Oriente) (Michele Brunelli)... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

1. La politica estera turca ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
2. Regione Eurasiatica (Asiatica – Centroasiatica) - Federazione Russa - Afganistan.... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
3. La Repubblica Islamica dell'Iran: costanti e divergenze .. **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
3. Regione "Mediterranea": sponda araba e Medio Oriente . **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

## PARTE TERZA

### LE COMPATIBILITA'

1. Le realtà euro-asiatiche e la Turchia (Valeria Piacentini Fiorani) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
1. La disintegrazione dell'Unione Sovietica e la Repubblica di Turchia: una proiezione eurasiatica identitaria e "autocentrica" ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
  2. La disgregazione dell'Unione Sovietica e le nuove repubbliche eurasiatiche: convergenze e priorità strategiche..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

3. Specificità regionali: formazione di una classe politica autoctona – concezione del potere e sua organizzazione sul territorio – milizie e sicurezza personale – il fattore Islam ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
4. Il fattore-Militare: un esercito nazionale oppure milizie personali e/o gruppi etnici criminali? ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
5. La Repubblica di Turchia e la regione eurasiatica: quali compatibilità oggi? ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

#### Appendice

- La Regione Anatolico-Caucasica (Michele Brunelli) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
2. La Turchia e i paesi arabi del Golfo (Elena Maestri) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
- 1.1. L'Arabismo e il Golfo ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
- 1.2 Gli Ottomani e la Penisola Arabica ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
- 1.3 Il GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) e la Turchia ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
3. Turchia ed Europa. Quadro di sintesi di un lungo percorso.. **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
1. Le molte ragioni di una scelta fra miti, idealità e pragmatismo (Valeria Piacentini Fiorani) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
2. Quadro sinottico delle principali tappe dei rapporti e del processo di integrazione della Turchia nell'Unione Europea (Michele Brunelli) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
4. La politica energetica turca: uno sguardo d'insieme. Ricadute in termini di stabilità regionale e sicurezza energetica europea ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
1. Il nuovo gioco globale alla ricchezza mondiale (Valeria Piacentini Fiorani) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
2. Stabilizzazione economica e politica energetica: 2003 (Valeria Piacentini Fiorani).... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
3. I percorsi energetici (Michele Brunelli) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
4. La cooperazione nel settore energetico tra l'Unione Europea e la Repubblica di Turchia (Corrado Caruso) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

### PARTE QUARTA LA TURCHIA VISTA DAGLI ALTRI

1. Les peuples turcs en Sibérie : l'histoire et l'actualité. Panturkisme – le regard depuis la Russie (Evghenji Lishtovanny) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
2. Uno sguardo dalla Repubblica Islamica dell'Iran. Il “nodo” della Turchia (Dr. Majid Karshenas Università di Isfahan) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
3. Turkey at the polls: after the Tsunami (Prof. Soli Özel) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
- Surprising Election, Not-So-Surprising Result ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
- The Long Wave ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
- Susurluk and the Postmodern Coup ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
- The Republic's Great Test ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**
- Bibliografia di riferimento (indicativa) ..... **Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.**

## *Executive Summary (Valeria Piacentini Fiorani)*

*1. Contents and Line of Research. 2. Order and new Disorder within the Turkish Strategic Thought. 3. Turkey, the Eurasian<sup>1</sup> Context and the EU - Aims of this Research. 4. The Middle Eastern Quadrant, Iran and the Gulf. 5. Methodological Approach.*

### **1. Contents and Line of Research.**

The following research focuses on the regional dimension of the Turkish Republic of Anatolia, viewed through a geo-strategic perspective and regional power mechanisms.

In particular, we have taken into consideration its three projections:

- towards the Central-Asian region and its gateway, i.e. the Caucasus, to the east / north-east,
- towards the Iranian plateau and the Gulf region, to the east /south-east,
- and towards the Mediterranean basin, to the west, **with specific regard to the EU.**

This approach has enabled us to pinpoint three particular factors, that have always played a central role within the Turkish traditional systemic structure of power:

- Turkism
- Islam
- the Military

These three factors emerge as positive realities throughout centuries and millennia of “Turkish” (Turcophone Peoples) history. These same three factors occur throughout the history of the modern and contemporary Republic of Turkey. Thus, they can provide us with as many precious clues to the understanding of Turkey’s social / institutional structure, balances and un-balances, and allow us to better understand the forces which move them, and how these gears turn in the regional context. Within this framework, it is well possible to identify and evaluate the intrinsic dynamics, that nowadays have a major impact on the Republic’s political system and its codes, a system that is

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<sup>1</sup> One objection may arise from the term “Eurasia” in this research, which has given life to a controversial debate within the international debate. Notwithstanding some authoritative voices, within the context of this research the term “Eurasia” seems appropriate, since it leaves open the boundaries of a territory still *in fieri*, whose frontiers are porous and still very fluid. Here, it is primarily meant to identify those regions part of the former Soviet Union and adjoining territories or gravitating around and interlinking with them. A term-concept which takes us immediately to the Caucasus region – its gateway – and to the traditional Middle Eastern region.

moving towards Modernity on the one hand, and is still anchored to its Traditional sector (traditional cultural models) on the other.

Such a methodological approach has enabled us to emphasize the relevance of specific components of the local society *vis-à-vis* the ethnical-cultural components of ‘foreign (new)-actors’, such as the Western world with its model of freedom and democracy on the one hand, and the Eurasian / Iranian / Arabian individual patterns of society and statehood on the other, emphasizing similarities and the profound diversification between them, the weight of such differences, which should not be underestimated, and their interaction. Then, a different political picture emerges and a more nuanced perspective is needed.

Viewed through this lens, we have been tempted to re-read the period following the disruption of the Soviet Union and the end of the bi-polar confrontation, avoiding the theoretical line usually followed by some scholars, that is the line of a “Western” and / or Euro-centric approach. This requires a simultaneous consideration of Turkish political agenda and Ankara’s choices and policy-making vs. the United States and the EU, and new regions of “opportunity”.

This line also means to avoid any open opposition and demarcation between different and diverging ethnic components and cultures. Conversely, despite facts - such as wars, open revolts, internal strife, terrorism, organised crime groups, human-rights violations, the persistence of a still great traditional sector vs. modernity, etc. -, Turkish official literature combined with internal debates and other evidence allow us to try to trace a new interpretation, based on Turkish perception of National Security, *Turkish perception* of threats and risks to its National Territory and Security, and its ensuing strategic priorities.

Then – considering Ankara’s strategic doctrine, and Ankara’s projections and foreign policy as a dynamic process within a Military domestic order – it has also been possible to put forward some working hypotheses on Turkey as a stabilizing and stability factor: *a bridge or a breach?*

All in all, this line of research leads us to assess a coherent, lucid political insight on behalf of the various Turkish governances, aiming at a domestic broader consensus vs. emerging factors of sectarianism, strife and political unrest on the one side, and reflecting new rising values and interests compatible with internal policy, on the other. External legitimacy and domestic consensus have allowed Ankara to build in the Seventies of the previous century a well structured blocking of alliances and priorities (the Gulf Region) based on understandings with the peoples settled in these regions and their individual culture and leaderships. Such a political trend was built on the clear perception of differences and reciprocal complementarities, as many factors standing in the way of closer cooperation. This political trend was successfully resumed by Turgut Özal in the Eighties (the Eurasian Region), who worked out a new set of blockings in the name of “national interests”

(empirically structured on “links” / “convergence”), which provided Ankara with international legitimacy within its Military commitments and in the framework of the institutions and general rules that managed the bipolar world. Turgut Özal’s political activism (domestic and international) enforced the “Allies” (the United States and Europe) to actively support Ankara’s foreign policy to play the role of “Bridge” within the restless and (apparently) crumbling Eurasian region. In the Nineties, Turkey’s foreign and security policy reached its peak as a stabilizing regional factor, with positive impacts on the regional and collective security system. This role became more evident in the case of the war in the former Yugoslavia, for example, and as far as it could continued to act in Eurasia within the framework of multilateral international institutions and bilateral agreements.

After September 11<sup>th</sup>, this position has evolved, and has been shaped in the new “Strategic Exposure” doctrine, which views Turkey’s presence and active role within sensitive regions.

This is a reality definitely under way, which has brought to new Turkish strategic visions and a new Strategic dimension in terms of threat and risk. This is a reality which has definitely conferred to Turkey the central role of “Energy Bridge” vis-à-vis the ever increasing energetic demand and the ever increasing vacuum, fear, insecurity and tactics of terror in the Middle Eastern quadrant. This is a reality, which, beyond any ideological and political link, is becoming more and more operational following recent (bilateral) agreements.

And Europe? The Mediterranean Region is intrinsic part of Ankara’s security doctrine and perceptions. Rather than reliable, Europe is often considered as an obstacle, which imposes “ heavy strings” to Turkey’s process on the path of Modernity. European political and strategic weakness is well perceived, especially when it comes to European hesitation and reluctance, Greek ambiguity, Cyprus hostility, New Europe’s ambitions. This is the great question when the Republic of Turkey confronts itself with the EU and the European political and intellectual debate. In this respect, we have restricted ourselves to evaluate the impacts of an hypothetical Turkish accession to the EU, trying to pinpoint some amongst its many positive and negative impacts.

On the same level, another factor is emerging with foreseeable urgency: the already mentioned energy factor. In this respect, Europe has a central role to play, and Turkey’s policy aims at proposing the National Territory as the Energetic Bridge for European Energetic Security (Ecevan and Erdogan Programmes).

Bearing in mind the aforesaid reflections, this research-work has been organised according to the considerations outlined in this premise. Special attention has been paid to the Turkish strategic debate. Within this debate, three factors nowadays emerge and acquire particular importance: the Military (kernel of more than one internal and external political choice) and its present role – the restructuring of the National Security Council; the Islam-factor (a re-emergent

dimension) and its systemic-structural “Turkish” reality; and Turkism (a pre-Islamic dimension, deeply rooted in the cultural milieu of all Turkish / Turkophone peoples) and its trans-frontier and ethno-national potential.

These are positive structures. Precisely as a result of their formal and informal / personal nature, are particularly flexible, and can be easily transformed into political instruments.

## ***2. Order and new Disorder within the Turkish Strategic Thought.***

To sum up, then the following research-work aims at focusing the geopolitical and geo-strategic role that the Turkish Republic can play within the new, global dimension of the third millennium.

In an atmosphere of anachronisms and contradictions, dominated and definitely conditioned by scientific discoveries (IT, Bio Techs., Nano Techs., etc.), new ideas seem to hold the stage and regional traditional barriers are collapsing to give way to a new form of globality, globalisation and modernity.

There is no doubt that we are facing a new scenario, showing growing outward signs over diminishing public order in more than one stage. Among many other crucial points, let us consider – for example - how important and fragile the US-Russian relationship (or alliance) is, how intriguing the turnarounds of the US-China rapprochement are, which imperatives the pragmatic check of political reconstruction in Iraq are creating, which alarming disorder is bursting in Palestine, which armed political groups are actively moving in the Eurasian region, which new ideological-political trends are emerging and grasping a de facto power, which threats are resulting from frantic shifts in the Middle Eastern puzzle, etc. There are new, alarming links, though it is possible to envisage important motivational and operational differences between the various “groups” – old and new regional actors.

These are impending, realistic challenges. New forces are coming into being, which in their turn necessitate a new analysis of the global political system: threat spirals towards disaster and new confrontations, or democratic reforms and dialogue? Which peace, which stability, which security, which existing laws and which rule of law in existing societies? And, in order to achieve these targets, which dialogue, which talks and which negotiations? But, above all, which war-makers? Which armed political groups? Which terrorist groups? Which new trans-national organized crime groups?

In this context, it also seems that the dominant factors are uncertainty, violence, terror, micro and macro criminality, abuse of power and oppression, repression and abuse of power and human rights, regional conflict and new forms of conflict, internal strife, feuds and traditional family/tribal clashes and retaliations which represent new worrying challenges. Corruption seems to prevail together with illegal trafficking and criminal activities (weapons, drugs, human beings, financial resources...) and crime. The indiscriminate exploitation of the environment is adding natural disasters and new forms of human catastrophe.

There is no doubt that all these realities represent a worrying challenge and demand a positive reshaping of civil and political society.

These are worrying dilemma, well perceived within the Turkish political and strategic thought.

Then, which security? Which stability? If one believes that State-crisis is not a category but rather “a set of syndromes” that appears with notable variations across territories of the contemporary world, any theoretical approach and cross-regional analysis (so dear to some scholars and schools of thought) becomes misleading. The reconstruction and/or deconstruction of a paradigm should always be performed following the lines of precise, individual links and fractures, according to the real forces acting within a specific cultural reality and not those of an imaginary, Western institutional nature.

Henceforth, within Turkish strategic thought area-studies assume a centrality of their own and come to the forestage, especially when debating stability and security. The crises have multiple dimensions. Often, they have their individual roots in the past and in cultural traditions still well alive.

Turkish political and strategic debates underline this precise context. Consequently, in more than one authoritative political and strategic forum, the perception of the new impending threats of this third millennium are forging new scenarios, which are shaping in their turn a new perception of Turkish security, its major risks and threats.

Turkish political elites are witnessing the implosion of states, regional disruption and, with it, the regional disruption of the traditional concept of statehood<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> An objection, which has given rise to a lively debate, comes from the classification of “state crisis” and the methodological approach to this subject. State crisis is not a category but rather “a set of syndromes”, that appears with notable variations across territories of contemporary world. Any theoretical approach and cross-regional analysis (so dear to some scholars and schools of thought) should not marginalize area-studies. The reconstruction and/or deconstruction of a paradigm should always be performed following the lines of precise, individual links and fractures, according to the real forces acting within a specific cultural reality and not those of an imaginary Western institutional nature. The crises have multiple dimensions, having their roots in an analysis of specific realities with all their variants and different contingencies. The paradigm should never be the product of an abstraction or an “a priori” conceptualisation of a structural and functional scheme. Emblematic in this respect is Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford

An extensive and authoritative Turkish literature underlines how stability and security to day acquire a regional, collective, cooperative and multilateral dimension, in an analysis of specific realities with all their variants and differing contingencies. Security is no longer a paradigm, and cannot be the product of an abstraction or an “a priori” conceptualisation of a structural and functional scheme. The global and globalised dimension in which the world is moving also implies new security structures and, with them, new and adequate instruments (*not necessarily military*).

In particular when facing times of crisis, conflicts and/or emergencies of whatever nature – whether these threats and tensions are internal or are represented by an external aggression or violence (as it is the case of present day Iraq and the Middle Eastern juncture, or that of the Iranian question and the Eurasian region and its disruption) – well, at this very point the system’s new dimension makes ever more crucial to re-engineer traditional security techniques and technologies. Each definition must be considered in wider regional and international contexts.

This is the Turkish political and military thought to day.

In terms Turkish Perception of “Threat” and “Risk” it can well be summarized as follows:

- WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) – Proliferation of NBC Weapons
- Illicit Trade and related Human Abuse (kidnapping, assassination, extortion...)
- Terrorism and Terrorist Destabilisation of Political and Economic Structures
- Other Trans-national Organised Crime (such as narcotics, drug trafficking, arms and weapons smuggling, money laundering...)
- Surrounding States’ Instability – Bad Governance, Corruption
- Asymmetrical Threats
- Ethnic and Civil Strife, Separatism, Racism, Micro-Nationalism and, conversely, Ultra-Nationalism
- Sectarian Strife, Religious Fundamentalism, Theocratic Pattern of Statehood versus Secular State System, Religion as Human Right
- The “Kurdish Question” and Kurdistan as a new rogue state.

### ***3. Turkey, the Eurasian Context and the EU - Aims of this Research.***

The disintegration of the Soviet Union has undoubtedly created a new order (or disorder) in Central Asia and the Caucasus region.

The historical frame of reference may indicate that the Gulf Crises of 1990-1991 and 2003-2004, and especially 11 September, have marked a turning point for the whole system of security and international relations. There is no doubt that they put the final seal on the undisputed political-military and economic-financial superiority of the United States, on the intensification of the process of economic and market globalisation, and on the build-up of a new world order.

The Eurasian context is not immune to this new reality.

It follows that the new order (or disorder) in which the new post-bipolar world is moving is enhancing that there is no longer space for individual actions or for autarkic policies. In all likelihood, the success will be directly proportional to the possibility – and capability – to foresee and anticipate aggressions, identify and classify the real potential and quality of the threat, define concepts, roles, interests and strategies...and dialogue, negotiate and collaborate with the various subjects, regional and out-of-area actors. With renewed urgency, security can no longer be the product of any individual-“national” action. As I have already underlined in more than one forum, nowadays security is a multidimensional reality (political-institutional, economic, cultural and human) and becomes the product of a collective and cooperative system<sup>3</sup>.

With specific regard to this reality, and, in particular, with specific regard to the present strategic debate within Turkish political circles, as afore said this study has taken into consideration some individual factors (the Military, Islam and Turkism), that cannot be neglected when discussing also about European security, European risks and threats.

Empirically speaking, such a line has brought to focus our research-work on Turkey’s regional role, giving priority to the Turkish projection towards Central Asia, namely on Turkey’s thrust towards:

- a) *the Eurasian basin*, with its immense riches in terms of energetic resources (oil and gas),
- b) *the Eurasian threshold*, that is the Caucasus region.

Undoubtedly, both regions have great relevance especially if viewed in terms of:

- a) security impact on Europe (risks and threats),
- b) lakes of opportunities.

With specific regard to the first aspect, that is “*security*”, the nowadays situation shows a clear convergence between European and Turkish national interests and strategic thoughts. There

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<sup>3</sup> See one and for all V. Fiorani Piacentini (a cura di), *La disintegrazione dell’Impero Sovietico. Problemi di Sicurezza Nazionale e Collettiva in Asia Centrale*, Ricerca CeMiSS, Febbraio 1995.

are some relevant factors, which stand in the way of closer cooperation. Among these emerging forces one can enumerate:

1. escalation of tensions, terrorism, trans-national organised crime activities, trans-national guerrilla-groups, *and* related domino effects;
  2. arms stores, international terrorism and access to financial resources for terrorist attacks (such as smuggling routes and use of smuggling routes, specialist skills – e.g. forging of travel documents -, cross-border movements, illicit drug cultivation, processing and international trafficking, etc.), terrorist destabilisation of political and economic structures, links among organised crime groups themselves<sup>4</sup>;
  3. energetic resources;
  4. oil and gas routes;
  5. micro / macro criminality, terror tactics;
  6. drugs-trafficking (see above, n.2);
  7. weapons and human trade;
  8. poorly guarded national borders and – in some cases – lack of political will to establish rule of law;
- etc.

With regard to the second aspect, that is “*lake of opportunities*”, the security and stability factors come once again to the forestage. Rebuilding after regime collapse is a difficult and hard work – as we see in Afghanistan and Iraq. In this field, there is a large degree of cooperation.

Both Central Asia and the Caucasus are undoubtedly facing a *de facto*, mounting regional power-vacuum. It requires close international engagement. As a result, it is incumbent upon the US government, the OSCE in a different way, and the international community as a whole (UN?) to ensure stability and security in a region that is of vital importance for the new global order.

Europe has its own cultural maturity to step ahead (although in a - no doubt - troubled political transition) and to face the many challenges of its future. In this respect, knowing as much about the history and the tradition of the region, Europe may enter “the market”, translating noble pronouncements into action plans and back door diplomacy. This would mean to provide planning

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<sup>4</sup> It would be worth looking at the links between organised crime groups and terrorist groups, and at the links among organised crime groups themselves. Moreover, and empirically observing, international drug trafficking could hardly work and function without organised crime groups cooperating with each other. See UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) pilot study surveying 40 groups in 16 countries.

and know-how in some specific sectors, thus neutralising potential threats and risks. For example: systemic-structural reforms capable of dealing with the new political status and the requirements resulting from the newly acquired independence (bureaucratic apparatus, law system, banking system, communication networks, human resources and human security, education, prevent radical individuals and groups from carrying out terrorist activities and illicit trafficking, etc..).

It is worth looking critically at European Member States' capability to enter the market and act in collaboration (and not competition) with Turkey. A broader planning is still required. However, they represent the only premise to break out of a long-lasting economic isolation and present economic crisis. The latter is premise, in its turn, to any vital economic reconstruction and re-conversion towards a market-economy and modernity vs. a traditional economy. In any case, they do represent a pre-requisite for preventing and combating instability, disruption, terrorism... and reducing common risks and threats.

Thus, in its turn and at the same time, Turkey can play a crucial role in this respect. At the same time, this role can be complementary to the European action, both in the military and in the diplomatic - civil sectors (for example, counter the ideologies and propaganda of secular and non-secular groups, technical assistance, strengthening the capacity of law enforcement, intelligence, education and human security).

Turkish policy-makers have clear perception of this context and its contingencies. Turkish policy-makers have also clear historical perception of the risk of chaos and civil war in such a traditionally difficult region. Turkish policy-makers consider action as a priority strategic target. Turkish policy-makers envisage such an action as a step to be undertaken and carried out, if possible, in collaboration with Europe. A recent study has identified some specific types of cooperation or linkage: logistical, operational, ideological, political, financial *and military*.

#### ***4. The Middle Eastern Quadrant, Iran and the Gulf.***

Turkey was officially recognised as an EU candidate in December 1999, and in December 2002 the European Council announced that if Turkey met its political Copenhagen criteria by the end of 2004 it would open negotiations without delay. By the end of 2004, this target was a *fait accompli* notwithstanding a lively and controversial debate within the various Union's members. By the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006, negotiations started.

There is no doubt that we are facing a new scenario, whose historical frame of reference may indicate that the Gulf Crises of 1990-1991 and 2003-2004, and especially 11 September have

marked a turning point for the whole system of security and international relations. As already stated above, there is no doubt that they put the final seal on the so far undisputed political-military superiority of the United States, on the intensification of the process of economic and market globalisation, and on the build-up of a new world order.

Within this scenario, there is no doubt, too, that the Gulf, with its immense riches, is destined to play a major role of its own, showing – among many other crucial points – how fragile and confusing is the political reconstruction in Iraq and in the Middle Eastern puzzle, how theoretical is so far the US mission for global democratisation and freedom.

And, once again, it is well possible to state that the Gulf's context is not immune to this new reality. Nor is it immune to Turkey's activism

Then, which security? Which stability? Also on this subject there is an international extensive and authoritative literature, that has involved *also* Turkey's political and strategic circles in a lively, internal debate: at the dawn of 2006, vis-à-vis the new impending, realistic challenges, new forces are coming into being, which in their turn necessitate a new analysis of the global political system. The Gulf region - with its individual actors and cultural patterns of statehood, democracy and freedom – is at the core of strategic Turkish literature. Which peace, which stability, which security in the Middle Eastern quadrant? And, in order to achieve these targets, which dialogue, which talks and which negotiations? But, above all, which war-makers and which major players?

Once again, there is no doubt that the United States are destined to put the final seal on the so far challenged Middle Eastern region, given their undisputed political-military superiority. There is no doubt that the US target is the intensification of the process of economic and market globalisation, and the build-up of a new middle-eastern order (be it the traditional Middle East or a Greater Middle East). But Turkey has no doubt that Ankara, too, has a role to play in this region. This role comes from the deep acquaintance that Turkish peoples have always had at peace and at war with the Iranians and the Arabs, and with their individual cultural patterns of life and governance and their individual power systems.

However, without indulging into repetitions, this research will restrict itself to few comments with specific reference to Turkey's politics in the Gulf region since the eighties of the previous century and Özal's undertakings.

Also in the case of present day Iraq and the Middle Eastern juncture, Turkish strategic circles give for granted that, at this very point, the system's new dimension makes ever more crucial to re-engineer traditional security techniques and technologies. However, each definition must be considered in wider, regional and international contexts. But it cannot disregard tradition and the

individual traditional structures/systems that are the pragmatic articulation of the individual cultures through centuries if not millennia.

Also in the case of the Gulf region and the Middle Eastern quadrant, the new order (or disorder) in which the new post-bipolar world is moving is enhancing that there is no longer space for individual actions or for autarkic policies. In all likelihood, the success will be directly proportional to the possibility – and capability – to foresee and anticipate aggressions, identify and classify the real potential and quality of the threat, define concepts, roles, interests and strategies...and dialogue, negotiate and collaborate with the various subjects, regional and out-of-area actors. With renewed urgency, security can no longer be the product of individual-“national” action. In this specific respect, and, even more specifically, given that security is a multidimensional reality (political-institutional, economic, cultural and human) and becomes the product of a collective and cooperative system, Turkey may play a role due to its thorough, long-lasting experience of the region and its acquaintance with the traditional, sophisticated regional patterns.

Ankara’s perception is that, to day, Turkey is an important regional actor, with an already complex set of alliances and blocking combinations which include the Gulf context.

Its policy has been particularly active in both the Military and Cultural spheres, and has led to particular regional action and diverse models of engagements (bilateral and multilateral).

*And Europe?* Undoubtedly the Gulf’s stability is also one of the EU priorities. In this respect, there would be space to take into consideration the advantages (beyond the disadvantages) of a Turkish collaboration *also* in this key-area, and the role that Ankara might play in a near future as a shock-absorber and major actor within the new regional context in order to enforce peace and stability.

This said, Iran comes to the forestage vis-à-vis Turkey. Iran is “potentially” an important rival to Turkey for influence and opportunities.

Tehran is a potential rival to Ankara in Central Asia and the Caucasus, although Iran has maintained a low profile in both regions. Rather than exporting revolutionary trends, Tehran has provided technical and financial assistance and has built new cultural ties. Iran’s policy in both Central Asia and the Caucasus has been inspired by geopolitical issues and realistic considerations, Tehran’s primary concern being the Persian Gulf: to prevent there unrests and the spilling over of Middle Eastern troubles, and to restructure there its regional power presence filling the void created by the Iraqi turmoil.

Despite there are claims that some “terrorist” groups are making money and waging disruption from “organised crime activities”, there is no solid evidence that Tehran has been using

terror tactics in the Gulf. It may have tended to become more operational in some instances, where there are also some ideological and political links between the two coastal regions. However, and more likely, the reported links appear more as individual “business” than state-oriented (and/or supported) politics. In some cases, due to the lack of conclusive proofs, one could suspect that such alleged links have been used as an instrument, masterly manipulated, to deter foreign interference in a “very sensitive” area and create an environment more “conductive” to Tehran’s political and economic interests and activity.

Russia’s effort to intensify ties to Iran in these last years has definitely been viewed with concern in Ankara, which reality may have contributed to bring Turkey closer to Israel (the “Israeli connection”). Nevertheless, on the whole it would appear that, beyond all internal strategic debates and concerns, Ankara’s political line towards Iran is still “empirically oriented and inspired”, that is to say that – within the restless and disrupted Middle Eastern quadrant – collaboration with Tehran is perceived as a necessary requirement, a positive alliance of conveniences, which also means to equate Iran’s connections with foreign “partners” with a closer cooperation between Tehran and Ankara in specific sectors of common interest and convergence (e.g. the frontiers, which are porous and still very fluid; some military skills and technologies, etc.).

To a closer analysis, Ankara’s strategic perception has not changed with Turkey’s sense of European identity and its ensuing policy and aspirations. US perspectives may affect the Turkish calculus in the Middle East in complex ways, but may no longer be a limiting element in Ankara’s policy, which undoubtedly during these last months is viewing the growth of new strategic relationships. The Israeli connection can offer a new significant geometry in Turkish relations with the Middle East and the Gulf – accession to the EU would complete Ankara’s strategic equation. Growing Turkish military capability and its willingness to complete regional intervention in defence of national interests can make Turkey an increasingly significant regional actor *in its own right*.

The following research-work aims at analysing these issues, and evaluate their geo-political, strategic dimension.

*To sum up:* at the dawn of this third millennium, Eurasia is still perceived as a sphere of opportunities. The Middle East is to day perceived more as a sphere of risks and threats than opportunities. The Persian Gulf is perceived as a sphere of security (human, economic and energetic security).

On such a basis, Turkey’s strategic views follow a precise line: as a state member of the European Union, the preceding considerations can have an important impact also on EU foreign policy and interests, including the Persian Gulf region, given (a) its geographical and geopolitical location; (b) its borders; (c) its projection towards the Middle East and the Persian Gulf regions, the

Caucasus and the Black Sea regions, Asia and Central Asia; (d) its military restructuring and systemic reform already under way; (e) its complex set of alliances and blocking combinations.

All in all, Turkey would be a very precious dowry that the European Union has accurately to take into consideration.

### ***5. Methodological Approach.***

The geographic centrality of the Anatolian plateau as crossroad between the vastness of the Eurasian region, the Middle-Eastern theatre and the Mediterranean basin, undoubtedly enhances the Republic's position and its strategic centrality. Thus, it gives to this country the role of key player within an increasingly globalized order based on market economy, democracy and freedom (Bush 2 doctrine).

Within this framework, to day Turkey stands out as a new incognita vis-à-vis the Arabian world and its traditional, individual patterns of governance, the Iranian bureaucratic model of statehood, the new European system and structure, the Eurasian disorder, the emerging new Asian “drakes”. In particular, Turkey is an incognita when referring to the last US Asian Security Doctrine.

Thence, the centrality of Central Asia and its gateway, the Caucasus region.

Both are far from being secondary stages in terms of security and opportunities.

In a situation in which the risk of chaos and civil war is nowadays rapidly moving from the dimension of a theoretical and academic “scenario” to a more and more impending reality, three dimensions of Turkey's policies acquire definite relevance. Specifically:

- the Military Factor – its restructuring and its power-projection, potentialities and effective strike;
- the Islam Factor – its Turkish dimension. The Central Asian version: intrinsic theological/judicial instruments towards modernity;
- Turkism and its pre-Islamic pan-Turkish message. A “National” identity factor?

As already said, these three factors are realities, well present and at work in Central Asia and in the Caucasus region. To a certain extent, they represent Turkey's to day challenge to the Western concept of globalisation. To a certain extent, they are accompanied by popular consensus, they have an impact on regional media, and are producing changes (so far small changes) in policy and political attitudes. But they may produce changes on a larger scale, becoming as many stabilising or de-stabilising factors. Any balance becomes problematical and delicate especially when we find, on

the one hand, administrative structures and institutions on the Western model (secular tendencies) and, on the other, a traditional sector (and traditional forces) still well alive.

Extensive documentation and literature exists on this subject. Therefore, after initial considerations, it has been decided to give this study a more precise definition within the proposed theme, focusing on three specific factors, which nowadays represent three gears well at work within Turkish policy decision-making. This is a reality, both in terms of immediacy of events and of potential future developments and involvements, and in terms of global strategy.

As also already said, from this stance, three regions in particular revolve around the Republic of Turkey, and the Anatolian plateau, with increasing global (and globalised) strategic centrality: the Eurasian area and the Caucasus, the Middle Eastern quadrant and the Mediterranean. Most probably, all of them are destined to acquire importance in the forthcoming years as elements of internal and regional stability.

Given this premise, **on the level of contents and methodology**, from a mere practical and organizational point of view, the research has been articulated in three main independent although inter-related themes, so as to facilitate certain keys to its reading.

*1. An important first step of this research* has been to investigate each individuated traditional sector in its paradigmatic dimension:

*a) Turkism / pan-Turkism* - undoubtedly a power-system paradigm: ethnic / clanic groups, composition and respective historical-cultural roots, traditional political forces. These are factors, which are now re-emerging with their own political weight as aggregative or disruptive forces and ideological / cultural principles in the Eurasian region. Here, with the disruption of the Soviet order and within the ensuing transitional phase, there is no doubt that Turkism is acquiring increasing political-cultural weight taking advantage from a cultural vacuum. This research aims at analysing the role that Ankara is playing in this regional context. This also involves a closer investigation of the potential of Ankara's action, which could become a factor of internal and regional stability rather than an element of chaos, destabilisation and more or less extensive conflict...with positive impacts on a more globalised order (*Valeria Piacentini Fiorani + Appendix in collaboration with Nicola Melis, Cagliari University*).

b) *“Turkish” Islam* - the new paradigm of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century within the new Kemalist Turkish institutional-political structure and society. Though not officially in power, it is nowadays playing a political role, too. This analysis enables us to identify certain factors in the specific nature of the local religious reality. Islam in Turkey assumes specific connotations, which undoubtedly distinguish it from other neighbouring regions (the Iranian, the Arabian, the “Tatar” etc.). To day, these connotations are developing a determined role in internal, regional and inter-regional relations, where the need for a new paradigm in strategic thinking is deeply perceived. Appropriate Islamic judicial instruments allow to Islamic Law in Turkey a coexistence (peaceful to a certain extent) with modernity and “secularism”. “Fundamentalist” Muslim actors are inherently conservative; they tend to resist political upheaval and seek conditions of order and stability. Unlike terrorist groups – who project an ideal state for which they are prepared to sacrifice their lives – Turkish Islam sees no virtue in sacrifice, but operates according to a set of medium and long-term goals to be realised with maximum profit for the “Nation” and minimum risk. Turkish power-system is not “anti-state”. Turkish Islam is not “anti-state”, but a parallel organisational model with its own legal and ethical rules, hierarchy and authority...and military force when in need. It operates within the state. This research aims at studying such factors, and evaluate them in terms of stability and “priority” for internal security on the one hand, and in terms of regional stability within a regional dimension, where “Turkish” Islam can play a central role interacting to a greater extent in its projections in the regional politics, thus contributing to a shift in internal and regional balances (*Valeria Piacentini Fiorani*).

c) *The Military Factor* – the ever existing paradigm of all Turkish politics. A more nuanced perspective is needed when dissecting the nature between the Islam-Factor and the Military: Turkish Islam is not “anti-state”, as said in the point above, but a parallel organisational model with its own legal and ethical rules, hierarchy and authority...and military force when in need. With regard to this element, this research aims to envisage similarities and differences between the “Western” model of democracy and the Turkish, historical paradigm of power-system. It is difficult to assess the validity of one or the other model, its capabilities and opportunities without bearing in mind a precise, given context and its historical, deeply rooted tradition. There is a variety of strategies to combat criminal activity and anti-democratic regimes. In this research, the target is to analyse empirically the Military Factor as a positive structural element of the Republic of Turkey, its change of form, change of character, cross-over transformation within the Turkish state power-system

since the Twenties of the previous century, and as it works in-door and in the main areas where Turkey is active and is playing a central role, evaluating Ankara's interests, priorities, risks, threats and consequent positive/negative impacts on European security itself (*Michele Brunelli, Valeria Piacentini Fiorani*).

2. *The second step of this research is to envisage the impact of Turkey's action and its blockings of bilateral and multilateral agreements on the regional order, with specific regard to the I.R. of Iran, the Gulf region and the ex-soviet independent republics. One possible approach has been envisaged within the Military dimension and the ensuing foreign policy (Michele Brunelli, Valeria Piacentini Fiorani).*

3. *The third step of this research is to study Turkish political foreign activism, cooperation programmes (bilateral and multilateral) within the framework of its "legitimacy" and compatibilities with the various regional actors (Valeria Piacentini Fiorani, Elena Maestri, Michele Brunelli).*

This regional quadrant has been evaluated within its general framework and vis-à-vis regional challenges such as:

- (i) impending elections and to pass a budget;
- (ii) ideological and political movements and parties;
- (iii) and then, the re-definition of territorial borders and military capabilities to secure order and stability;
- (iv) existing minorities (religious and ethnic-cultural);
- (v) human rights;
- (vi) systemic-structural reforms capable of dealing with the new political status and all the new requirements, as it follows:
  - the need to break out of a long-lasting economic isolation;
  - the need to reorganize a collapsed Administration and reset an efficient bureaucratic state apparatus;
  - law enforcement;
  - organize economic structures and financial and banking systems capable of supporting the reconstruction and the new economic asset of the country;

- organize a “National Army” beyond existing paramilitary forces;
- communication networks – oil and gas routes;
- last but not least, education and human resources.

Ankara’s choices have been evaluated on the basis of Ankara’s assessment of risks, threats, opportunities and capabilities within each given context. A secondary analysis aims at focusing compatibilities and incompatibilities between the local traditional model of statehood and Turkey’s paradigm, links, convergence, assistance and joint action.

Within this broader frame, the Kurdish problem comes to the fore and has acquired a centrality of its own.

On the whole, this package of issues - viewed through security lens – has brought to focus on two main factors: the Energetic Programme and the thorny question of Turkish-European relations (*Valeria Piacentini Fiorani, Michele Brunelli, Corrado Caruso*).

***This research is completed by an Appendix of documents, as many “inside views” by regional actors: namely, Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey itself, Russia.***

Documents, maps, tables, statistical data integrate the text, conceived as useful keys to an analysis and evaluation of possible regional, international scenarios.

Bibliography.

***In conclusion***, considering a) the speed with which the political-strategic situation is evolving; b) the multiplicity of internal factors which intervene and /or interfere – and can continue to do so; c) the numerous regional (and out-of area) protagonists who – especially following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its regional implosion – interact with the various regional politics, thus shifting equilibriums, alliances, coalitions, partnerships etc....,well, considering all above, we have decided to provide, first of all, keys to a reading which, in the first place, enable an analysis of the various regional situations to be made “from within” “inward looking”. These give us the possibility of evaluations aimed at forecasts (scenarios) that are, more or less, the result of realistic appraisals and not of Utopian or science-fiction scenarios inspired by emotions or journalistic and media styles.

Consequently, rather than indulging in historical, geographical-descriptive or political/geo-political analysis, it has been preferred to consider the mechanisms by means of which the various political forces act and interact. Then, to analyse the mechanisms – and when possible, the gears,

too – of this functioning within the regional context and focusing on the individual paradigms in strategic thinking. This has brought to pinpoint the potential lines along which fractures or breaks can or may develop, as well as convergence, cooperation and links. From this, also emerges the importance of individual area-studies – with their individual, different historical-cultural heritages – as a key to understanding specific, local realities, which change and evolve according to mechanisms set in motion by the logical coherence of traditional models and balances.

Valeria Piacentini Fiorani

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