



ISLAMIST IRAN AND TURKEY, 1979-1989: STATE PRAGMATISM AND IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

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Many analysts expected that the Iranian Revolution of 1979 would severely deteriorate relations between Iran and Turkey because an Islamist Iran would never accept a Kemalist Turkey as a neighbor. During the first decade after the revolution, however, this did not happen due to Tehran's appreciation of its own practical political interests over ideology. Iran needed Turkey to continue its war with Iraq; Turkey needed good relations with Iran for economic reasons. Both feared possible Soviet infiltration in the region. Therefore, ideological hostilities were downplayed and decent relations maintained.

Following Iran's 1979 Islamist revolution, it was logically expected that Turkey and Iran would be in conflict due to different goals, alliances, and ideological orientations. As Suha Bolukbasi remarked, "Had the relations between Turkey and Iran been simply influenced by the ideological considerations, they should have been each other's mortal enemies."⁽¹⁾ However, this did not happen during the first decade of the revolution. Indeed, operating on a pragmatic basis, both countries maintained reasonably good relations and even improved their economic ties. This article analyzes the main factors behind that outcome.

AN OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF RELATIONS BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

Until the 20th century, the interaction between Iran and Turkey evolved around the historical Ottoman-Persian and Shi'i-Sunni rivalries. These two big, neighboring empires had been in latent conflict since they were rivals for the leadership of the whole Islamic world. Although Iranians were successful in agitating and sometimes mobilizing small dissident groups (mainly the Alevi) inside the Ottoman lands, the Ottomans,

however, were able to overcome the problems and restrict any Shi'i expansionism.

This nature of the traditional relations had changed by the end of the First World War with the establishment of a new republic in Turkey in 1923 and the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran in 1924. Turkey rejected the Ottoman legacy, abandoned any territorial and religious claims, and adopted a nationalist stance in foreign policy that excluded pan-Turkish and pan-Islamic aspirations. The main concern was to Westernize and modernize the country. Therefore, preserving "good relations with all neighbors" became a priority goal for Ankara in its foreign policy.⁽²⁾

On the other side, Reza Shah of Iran was following a similar path to that of Turkey. He had also ceased to follow traditional foreign policy with its religiously determined character in favor of a more secularized conduct, a course symbolized by his change of the country's name from Persia to Iran. Preserving good relations with neighboring countries, including Turkey, was an essential point of his policy. His primary aim was to consolidate his regime rather than to engage in external affairs. These new policy directions and

geopolitical conditions created an ideological affinity between Iran and Turkey, which facilitated their reconciliation. Soviet ambitions were another factor behind this rapprochement. The two countries had a strong interest in each other's stability.(3)

Under these conditions, an environment of cooperation and collaboration in some regional issues was created. Treaties of security and friendship were signed in 1926 and 1929, followed in 1937 by the "Sa'dabad Pact" which pledged the signatories to non-interference, non-aggression, consultation on security affairs, and arbitration of problems.(4)

Both countries sided with the Western bloc during the Cold War. While Turkey joined NATO to cope with the Soviet threats, the shah attempted to establish strategic relations particularly with the United States. The common perception of threats (Soviets, radical movements, etc.) produced the "Baghdad Pact" in 1955. The Pact and its successor CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) did not satisfy the security needs of the participating countries, particularly in the Cyprus problem of Turkey, the 1958 Iraqi revolution, or on the Kashmir problem of Pakistan. For this reason, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan established a new organization in 1964, named the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), while CENTO remained alive but ineffective.(5)

Iran and Turkey were the only Muslim states which recognized the state of Israel immediately after its establishment in 1948. As non-Arab and as pro-Western states in the Middle East, they were isolated to a certain extent by Arab countries, which intensified their efforts to seek support from the Western powers. Yet the existence of all these commonalities about the perceptions of threats did not result in intensified economic relations. Turkish import

substitution-based economic programs and difficulties with its balance of payments, along with Iran's sole dependence on oil exports and huge arms buying expenses were the main reasons for the low level of trade and economic interactions.

In addition, there were some disputes between the two countries, especially on the Kurdish problem, which became a major issue particularly after the 1970s when the shah backed an Iraqi Kurdish rebellion. This had real implications for Turkey, which had a large Kurdish population within its borders. The tension abated when the Shah stopped his support for the uprising in the 1975 Algiers Accord with Iraq.(6)

TURKISH ATTITUDES TOWARD THE REVOLUTION

In the late 1970s, the revolutionary process had gained momentum in Iran. There were huge street demonstrations and increased attacks against military targets in big cities such as Tehran, Mashad, Tabriz, and Qum. As a neighbor, Turkey's first concern was about a possible Soviet intervention or Communist takeover in Iran which would damage Turkey's security interests.

The Turkish government, however, preferred neutrality toward Iran's internal conflict. Politicians consciously refrained from any clear declaration of support for the Shah in his difficulties. When revolutionaries declared their victory on February 13, 1979, Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit's government immediately recognized it as the legitimate regime and declared Turkey's desire to develop relations in the new era.(7) In his message to Tehran, Ecevit stressed the importance of preserving good bilateral relations and Turkey's intention not to interfere in Iran's internal affairs. He advised "other countries to do the same," a point aimed at the Soviet Union but also applying to the United States.(8)

At that moment, the Shah was not popular in Turkey because of his Kurdish policy. Turkey was also relatively estranged from the United States because of its military embargo on Turkey in response to the 1974 intervention in Cyprus. Some Turkish newspapers criticized the Shah's use of force against the domestic opposition and saw him as a dictator. Thus, the lack of sympathy for Iran's ruler was a bigger factor than fear over the radicalism of the opposition in shaping Turkish government and popular views.(9)

Turkey next refused to join the U.S. economic embargo on Iran imposed after the embassy takeover and seizure of American diplomats as hostages in Tehran. The Turkish government condemned the Iranian behavior but also rejected U.S. demands for the use of the Incirlik basis in case of a military intervention inside Iran. This decision was closely related to the 1974-1978 U.S. arms embargo on Turkey. (10)

In response, the Iranian government declared its willingness to develop both economic and political relations with Turkey, although Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini continued to criticize Turkey's condemnation of the takeover.(11) This offer was welcome for Turkey, which was experiencing serious budget and balance of payments deficits. Thus, Turkey sent a message to the U.S. authorities in April 1980 stressing "the special nature of the historical good relations with Iran."(12) Foreign Minister Hayrettin Erkmén stated, "we said that the sanctions could not be beneficial [but would] be harmful. We are a neighboring country with Iran and have historical ties which will also be in the future."(13)

NEUTRALITY DURING THE WAR YEARS

When the Iran-Iraq war broke out on September 22, 1980, the military administration of Turkey immediately declared its neutrality towards the

belligerents and continued that stance throughout the eight-year-long war. The conflict worried Turkey because of the danger that it might spread, give rise to Kurdish demands for independence, and strengthen the capability and ambitions of two neighboring regimes that already had aggressive tendencies. But, on the other hand, the war brought Turkey new economic opportunities and increased its own strategic importance to the West as the old Cold War basis for solidarity was waning.(14)

The policy of neutrality discouraged Iran from using the Kurdish card against Turkey (as it did against Iraq), while leading to a dramatic increase in Turkey's trade volumes with both sides. Turkey also justified its policy by pointing out that a totally isolated Iran might feel compelled to side with the USSR. In a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz in Washington, Turkish Foreign Minister Vahit Halefoğlu remarked, "Iran should not be isolated. It should be understood within the context of its special conditions."(15) Turkey warned against U.S. intervention in the war and continued its refusal to let Washington use its bases in Turkey to support its military maneuvers in the Gulf. Plausibly, Turkey was even unhappy when Kuwait invited the United States to re-flag and escort its ships in the Gulf during the war years.(16)

The war provided real economic opportunities for Turkey. At the very beginning, Iran and Iraq had offered Turkey increased economic relations in order to guarantee its neutrality. For both of the warring parties, Turkey had a special position. There was an oil pipeline between Iraq and Turkey. When Syria decided to close the Syrian-Iraqi pipeline as part of its own alignment with Iran and as both sides attacked oil tankers, the Iraqi-Turkish pipeline became a life-line for Iraq. At the same time, Turkey was among the small number of countries (together with

Pakistan) whose roads and ports Iran could use for the delivery of strategic goods and arms.

Turkey upheld its position of neutrality in international diplomatic circles as well. It refused to join the international community in blaming Iran for dragging out the war. Instead, it preferred the approach taken by the UN, as expressed by Security Council Resolution 598, which called on both countries to cease hostilities. Ankara repeatedly offered to facilitate efforts at a dialogue between the warring parties, and acted as a go-between for the United States and Iran in late August 1987 in an unsuccessful attempt to defuse the growing tension in the Gulf. But Turkish authorities stressed that Ankara would undertake a formal mediating role only if both sides explicitly requested it to do so.

For Iran, the neutrality of Turkey meant a break in its isolation and even escape from a final defeat. Therefore, it chose pragmatic policies and refrained from stressing its ideological aspirations against Turkey, at least officially. On August 2, 1984, Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati expressed "Iran's happiness for Turkish neutrality" and wished "Turkey to continue its neutrality." (17) The result was the growing economic transactions between the two countries. Some tension areas such as the Kurds and operations by Iranian opposition groups were downplayed. Ideological tensions were mitigated by Iran. Therefore, it can be stated that the war encouraged pragmatic policies by both sides.

THE VENTURE OF ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Thus, the Iran-Iraq war brought Turkish-Iranian economic relations to the highest levels in history. In 1981 and 1982, barter agreements were signed according to which Turkey would buy oil from Iran with its own exports. The government of Prime Minister Turgut Ozal made similar agreements during the

second half of the 1980s. Consequently, the volume of trade increased to \$2.2 billion in 1983 and to \$2.3 billion in 1984 and 1985. These were amazing results for Turkey when compared with only \$63 million in 1975. In addition, Turkish income from transit fees increased to \$200 million in 1985. (18)

The development of trade resulted in the establishment of an Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) on January 28, 1985, which may have had more to do with Iran's effort to strengthen Turkish and Pakistani neutrality than as a trade promotion measure. A parallel reason could be given for the creation of the Ahvaz-Iskenderun Oil and Natural Gas Pipeline Project, which had first been proposed in the 1970s by the Shah. This project remained dormant until 2000. (19)

In 1986, there was a sharp decrease in trade. Turkish exports of \$1.1 billion and imports of \$1.3 billion in 1985 fell to \$564 million in exports and \$221 million in imports in 1986. The main reason was the decrease in Iranian oil income from \$17 billion to \$7.5 billion in 1986 as a result of falls in the oil prices on world markets. Another reason was Iran's demand to export non-oil goods which Turkey rejected, leading to the abolishment of the barter agreements. Tehran also accused Turkish firms of exploiting the war conditions to sell Iran goods at high prices. The president of the Iranian chamber of commerce proclaimed, "We will not accept such trade relations after the war." (20) Until 1988, trade continued at the lower levels.

WAR, KURDS, AND NORTHERN IRAQ

The Kurdish problem has presented a special issue between Iran and Turkey since the beginning of the 20th century. Kurdish insurrections in Turkey in 1925 and in 1929-1930 had caused many Kurdish tribes to cross the border into Iran, creating claims between Ankara and Tehran. This problem became more

serious after the Shah's policies in northern Iraq in the 1970s.(21)

The Kurdish policies of Iran and Turkey (and also of Iraq and Syria) have influenced each other. Very large areas on both sides of the border are inhabited by Kurds. In the course of the Iran-Iraq war, Iran actively assisted Iraqi Kurds, both in their insurrection against the Baghdad regime and as instruments of irregular warfare to help Iranian troops against Iraq along the border. Iran did not want the establishment of a Kurdish state in the region but rather used the Kurds for tactical purposes in order to open another front against Iraq. However, Turkey saw Iranian manipulations as a dangerous game that might intensify Kurdish nationalism and subvert Turkey.

Kurdish insurgent activities in Turkey had started to intensify in 1983 under the leadership of a Marxist terrorist organization, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Especially after the 1983 elections, there was a gradual escalation in guerrilla activity, conducted from the border areas in northern Iraq. This prompted Ankara and Baghdad to conclude an agreement allowing "hot pursuit" operations to be carried out by either side in each other's territory. From 1983 onward, Turkey's air force conducted bombing raids against guerrilla groups and hide-outs in northern Iraq, often in joint operations with ground troops. The first operation was held on May 26, 1983. Tehran did not publicly oppose this action.

In October 1984 Turkish air forces carried out a second operation. Some of the groups escaped to Iranian lands. On this occasion, a Turkish delegation went to Tehran to offer a similar agreement to Iran. Iran both refused such an agreement and condemned the Turkish-Iraqi agreement.(22) At the same time, Tehran warned Turkey about its military operations. The Majlis speaker Rafsanjani stated: "Iraq wants to protect its oil producing regions with the aid of a

NATO member. We warn the Turkish state not to place itself in opposition to the wishes of the Iraqi people. We shall not allow the Ba'th Party [the Iraqi regime] to stay for long in the region. You [the Turks] cannot solve the problem with the Ba'th Party."(23)

Meanwhile, however, in order to allay Turkish fears, Iran did conclude an agreement with Turkey in November 1984, committing each side to prevent any activity on its territory which threatened the security of the other. It was an accord which was generally enforced, and during the war years, there were only a few PKK attacks in Turkey which originated in Iran.(24)

Turkish air forces' third operation in March 1987 was strongly condemned by the Iranian regime which claimed, "By this, Turkey had showed that they were not neutral in the war, siding with Iraq" and it accused Turkey of "planning the capture of the Mosul and Kirkuk areas of Iraq."(25) Here was a real point of difference between the two countries. Iran was complaining since it had common operations with some of the Kurdish groups against Iraqi forces. (26) Turkey, however, perceived the Iranian-Kurdish alliance as against its own interests and as a threat to its internal stability. (27)

A new feature to the situation was also being added at this time, beginning in 1986, as it seemed like Iran might win the war. Believing that it was gaining influence in northern Iraq, Iran became more suspicious about alleged Turkish ambitions in that area. On Turkey's side, fear of an Iraqi collapse also raised questions about Iran's capabilities and goals. The Turkish government responded by declaring its support for preserving Iraq's territorial integrity and denying it had any claim on Mosul and Kirkuk.(28) On the Iranian side, Prime Minister Hussein Musavi warned, "the shakiness of Saddam regime should not give rise to territorial ambitions against Iraq or its resources." A similar note was

struck by President 'Ali Khamene'i, speaking to a gathering of Iraqi dissident groups in Tehran in December 1986. Khamene'i emphasized that Iran was committed Iraqi independence and territorial integrity, and that Iran would not hesitate to challenge any outside intervention in Iraqi affairs.(29)

Another area of friction emerged when an Iranian aircraft attacked and bombed the Habur Bridge on the Iraqi side of the Turkish-Iraqi border on March 27, 1988, in retaliation for the Iraqi aircraft bombing of Turkish-Iranian railroads on the Iranian side. The Iranian government claimed that the Iraqi aircraft used Turkish air space to reach Iran. Ankara rejected this claim and said that it was a neutral country that did not allow any aircraft from the belligerents to use its air space. Ankara also warned Iran that violations of Turkish air space would be met by fire.(30)

IRANIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

The revolution had left about 4 million Iranian refugees spread around the world and a large number went to or through Turkey. Estimates differ outlandishly. Some put the figure as low as 250,000, others as high as 1 million.(31) A better estimate might be between 600,000 to 800,000. That huge number of Iranian people inside Turkey posed major threats to Turkish domestic stability and its relations with Iran. It is generally believed that they were involved in illegal economic and political activities.

The situation was that Turkey became an arena of war among different factions of refugees who opposed the Islamist regime but varied among every variety of nationalist, monarchist, and leftist grouping. The infiltration of a large number of SAVAMA (Iranian Intelligence Organization) members into Turkey among the refugees is another dimension of the problem. The most striking example of these activities occurred in November 1988. Supporters

of the Islamic regime attempted to kidnap a prominent member of the Iranian opposition, an engineer, and to smuggle him back to Iran. The plot was foiled while the man was being driven across Anatolia in the trunk of the car.(32) Members of the Iranian embassy were accused of involvement in the affair; a charge Iranian authorities rejected.

Iran accused Turkey of not only permitting but even assisting anti-regime activities, particularly by the Mujahedin-i Khalq Organization (MKO). In addition to rejecting such claims, the Turkish government accused Iran of support to the PKK and Turkish fundamentalists in Iran by providing both education and finance. This issue remains an important factor in bilateral relations.

IDEOLOGICAL TENSIONS: A WAR IN THE PRESS

The different ideological orientations of the Iranian and Turkish regimes were expressed more in the media than directly by the governments or politicians. For the Iranians, who viewed the United States as the "Great Satan," the U.S.-Turkish alliance was a matter of criticism as were Ataturk's reforms that made Turkey want to be part of the Western system of states. Another dimension was Iran's attacks on Turkish recognition and relations with the state of Israel. These were all political rather than theological issues.

Occasionally, though, Khomeini also directly criticized Ataturk's reforms. In a speech made on August 24, 1986, he stated:

In the Islamic world, the ulama were led to believe that they had to obey the tyrants, oppressors, and the holders of naked power. Certain lackeys preferred to obey Ataturk, who destroyed the rule of Islam, instead of obeying the orders of the prophet. How can a reasonable mind accept this? Today, the ulama [in Turkey] who are the puppets of

the Pharaonic forces, teach the people the orders of God and the prophet, but at the same time call on them to obey Ataturk.... How can one argue that this is consistent with the notion of [Islamic rulers] whom God ordered us to obey? Obviously, [Islamic rulers] in the real sense can only be those who follow the order of God and his messenger...(33)

The effect of these types of messages revealed itself in the attitudes of Iranian officials visiting Turkey and diplomatic envoys to Turkey. For example, Prime Minister Mir Hussein Musavi publicly criticized the modernisation reforms of Ataturk and refused to pay homage at his mausoleum--a protocol requirement for visiting dignitaries--during his visit to Turkey in Summer 1987. He declared that he would rather be visiting the Mawlana shrine in Konya (Mawlana Jaleddin al-Rumi was a very influential Turkish-Iranian theologian in the thirteenth century). Prime Minister Ozal did not respond. Some Iranian newspapers wrote derogatory articles about Ataturk, and Turkish newspapers retaliated by writing same type of articles about Khomeini. However, officials chose to mitigate the tension.

As another example, in November 1988, the Iranian Embassy in Ankara refused to follow all other foreign missions by lowering its flag to half-mast to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Ataturk's death.(34) This was severely criticized by the Turkish press and described as "unforgivable insolence."(35)

The Turkish press often focused on the Shi'i nature of Iranian revolution and its propaganda activities against Turkish regime.(36) Some articles attacked Khomeini personally, with one journal claiming he acted with sexual license when in exile in Bursa, Turkey. In retaliation, the Iranian daily Islamic

Republic responded by saying "how much do [the Turks]...respect our live leaders that they expect us to respect the rotten bones of their dead leader [Ataturk]."(37)

The Iranian revolution was also debated intensely in the Islamic press of Turkey, whose different factions had very varied perspectives. Here is where one can examine the direct effect of the Islamist revolution on the Turkish people. Basically, we can classify them as pro- and anti-Iranian. The pro-Iranian press included the small periodicals *Shahadet* (Martyrdom), *Girisim* (Activity), and *Iktibas* (Citation).

The pro-Khomeini journals viewed this revolution as historically unique, as proving the only contemporary movement capable of doing away with foreign influence and exploitation was one that draws its strength from Islam. They stressed that "the struggle against imperialism and its local collaborators could only be carried out by means of a radical understanding of Islam, taking the period of the Prophet Muhammad as its model." Therefore, it was argued: "The Iranian Revolution should have been accepted as a true example for other Muslims in their struggle with imperialism." For them, Iran had proved the possibility of setting up an independent state free from superpower influence and relying on its own internal resources. Iran had also demonstrated that technological superiority can be overcome by a country united around a common purpose and faith. It made Muslims see the true meaning of identity precisely when Islamic identity was losing ground to a global process of Westernization. The major reason for international--especially U.S. and Soviet--opposition to Iran was "the fear that other Muslim states might follow the Iranian method."(38) Ironically, they had taken an old Turkish theme--the danger of Soviet imperialism--and recast it in Islamic terms.

To pro-revolutionary writers, Iran was the only example of a true Muslim community since the “Asr-i Saadet” (the Age of Happiness, referring to the Prophet and four true Caliphs’ reign).(39) They saw no difference between Shi’a and Sunni Islam since the Jafari branch of the Shi’a was very close to Sunni thinking. This claim ran counter to the Sunni mainstream which was critical of the Shi’a sect. Instead, they called for all true Muslims to ignore such differences and defend the Iranian regime in its war with both infidels (oppressors) and the Western-oriented governments in the Muslim World.(40)

Supporting the hardliners in Iran, these journals justified the regime’s purges (41) and viewed the Iran-Iraq war as resulting from the imperialist powers’ conspiracy against Iran, using Iraq as a “front” in their fight with Islam.(42) They rejected the idea that it was a Sunni-Shi’i conflict since they denied the Iraqi regime the title of a Muslim government. (43) Even Iran’s purchase of U.S. weapons and the ensuing scandal of 1986 were portrayed as an imperialist conspiracy to discredit the Islamic Revolution. (44)

Other Turkish Islamists were critical of the new Iranian regime, as shown in *Yeni Asya* and *Kopru* (newspaper and journal of the Nurcu Islamic movement), and *Turkiye* (newspaper of a traditional sufi tariqa-Isikcilar). The Nurcus argued that the Iranian people would pay a heavy price for ignoring a basic lesson of history that disorder and instability brought despotism. *Yeni Asya* columnists pointed out that what went on in Iran under the banner of Islam had little to do with the teachings of Islam. They insisted Turkish Muslims would not make this mistake and let Khomeini-type leaders propel their country into chaos. They especially stressed the Shi’a character of the revolution and concluded that this made it irrelevant for Sunni Muslims, while also pointing to traditional Shi’a-Sunni and Ottoman-Persian conflicts.

(45) The Nurcu periodical *Kopru* concluded that Khomeini’s speeches showed him to be anti-Sunni, stating, “Khomeini’s despotism was the direct result of Shi’a belief in the infallibility of the Imam.”(46)

Turkiye, representing the Isikcis, gave similar views, arguing that Khomeini was acting like the historic shahs by using Shi’a Islam as a weapon against the Sunni world, and stated that this revolution was nothing more than the use of the religion for achieving political goals of Iran. They claimed that “a Shi’a community cannot establish an Islamic state, because they are not Muslims” and warned the “Khomeini regime would eventually pave the way for the triumph of communism in Iran.”(47)

The attitudes of the National Salvation Party (NSP), the main Turkish Islamist political party, was more favorable. The revolution found support among its members and throughout 1979, the party daily, *Milli Gazete*, published both news reports and articles which looked favorably on the developments in Iran. In general, *Milli Gazete* was enthusiastic about the revolution and voiced the hope that other Muslim states might follow the Iranian example. The leader of the party, Necmettin Erbakan, welcomed the revolution and stated: “With the revolution, the Iranian people have rescued themselves from being in servitude to American imperialism.” *Milli Gazete* also published a series on the life of Khomeini and his struggle against American imperialism in June 1989, days after his death, which called him a “hero of the Islamic world who rescued the Iranian people from both Shah’s despotism and American exploitation.”(48)

However, some other Nakshis did not favor the revolution. For example, the Nakshi periodical, *Sebil*, published an article in 1979 arguing that the Soviet Union had started a war against the U.S. presence in Iran by the hands of

Khomeini. Here Khomeini had been shown as a person helping Soviet aims.(49)

The coincidence of the Iranian revolution with the rise in the Islamist radical movements in Turkey made Turkish leaders see them as connected, linking the Iranian government to Islamist radicals in Turkey and to propaganda efforts among Turkish workers in Western Europe, particularly in Germany.(50) In a book published and distributed by the Turkish Board of Higher Education, "The Causes and Targets of Anarchy and Terror in Turkey," Islamic fundamentalism was presented as one of the main threats to the Turkish Republic, Islamic movements were listed as Nurcus, Suleymancis, Nakshibendis, Khomeinists, the Hizb at Tahrir groups, and the Muslim Brothers. But the book gave a special focus to the Khomeinist groups:

The Khomeinist groups' fundamental aim is the establishment of a Shari'a state in Turkey. All these activities are supported by Iran and its representations in Turkey...The Iranian Revolution was followed with great interests by these reactionary groups....Such interests were enhanced as a result of Iranian propaganda, aiming to export the Islamic Revolution. Some people who believe in the possibility of an Iranian style revolution in Turkey got involved in such propaganda activities. The leadership cadres of these groups have established organic links with the government of Iran.(51)

These claims were repeated in the media at times. Yet during the 1980s there was little evidence offered publicly of material links between these groups in Turkey with Iran.(52)

A much more serious dispute arose over the *hijab* (headscarf) issue. Islamists, demanding freedom to wear headscarves in universities, mounted noisy countrywide demonstrations which were broken up by the police. When the Constitutional Court decided that the wearing of Islamic headscarfs by university students on campuses was illegal on March 7, 1989, street demonstrations were held in major cities of Turkey. The Iranian regime entered the fray in support of the Islamists in Turkey on the grounds that it had a duty to defend the rights of Muslims everywhere. Tehran radio's Turkish-language broadcasts attacked President Evren as a blasphemer. Khomeini denounced the ruling and expressed support for demonstrations against the ban. There were suspicions in Turkey that Iranians had helped in the organization and funding of the protests. Marches of support were also held in Tehran, and Iranian radio broadcast commentaries that continued to criticize the ban for a long time.(53)

The Iranian ambassador to Ankara warned that Iran was considering economic sanctions against Turkey. He threatened that "trade would be cut from \$2 billion to \$400 million in 1989."(54) The Turkish response to this threat was to recall its ambassador from Tehran, though it did not take the economic sanctions threat seriously since Iran also needed the trade. Iran's ambassador was made unwelcome by Turkey and was replaced by Muhammad Reza Bagheri, a Turkish-speaking Azeri with a skill at public relations. Tension was further reduced by the death of Supreme Leader Khomeini on June 3, 1989, his replacement by Khamene'i, and the election of 'Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani as president.(55)

Turkey also rejected Iranian demands that it break relations with Israel and ignored the lower-level criticisms of Turkey's efforts to become a full member

of the European Union. For example, in March 1989, the Tehran radio commentator stated that Turkish officials “are aware that as long as the roots of Islam appear to hold strong in their country, the Europeans will consider their presence among them as unsuitable and will prevent their entry into the EEC. It appears that the attempt to ban Islamic garb in the universities is actually a measure designed to gain the favors of the EEC.(56)

The radio commentary leveled further warnings to Turkey about preservation of its Islamic roots. Stating, “the framework specified by the Federal Republic of Germany chancellor [for EEC membership] will definitely culminate in the country being absorbed in the culture of Europe.(57)

Indeed, despite such remarks, Islamist Iran had to accept Turkey’s special relations with the West and domestic policies because of its strategic and economic need for good relations. Criticism largely remained within the boundaries of newspaper columns and radio broadcasting.(58)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The revolution changed most of the policies of Iran and all countries of the region, including Turkey, have been affected by this regime change. However, Iranian-Turkish relations during the revolutionary decade were mostly positively affected, particularly in economic terms. Pragmatic policies adopted by the two countries helped to solve ideological problems in a peaceful manner. In contrast, during the Shah’s time, the similar ideological orientations of Turkey and Iran did not suffice for collaborative political understanding and improved economic relations.

Despite the fact that the Iranian revolution was anti-U.S., anti-Western, and anti-modernist—all main pillars of Turkish policies—Turkey was able to develop a policy of peaceful coexistence.

Iran, too, acted pragmatically toward Turkey, in large part encouraged by the requirements of the Iran-Iraq war. If the revolution was to survive, Tehran knew it could not antagonize Turkey. Iran was cautious about trying to spread its revolution. Not all these features survived into the 1990s but they continued to form the basic substructure of the bilateral relationship.

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NOTES

1. Suha Bolukbasi, “Turkey Copes With Revolutionary Iran,” *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1 & 2, (Fall/Winter), p. 94.
2. Graham Fuller, *The Center of the Universe: The Geopolitics of Iran* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 191-195.
3. Shireen Hunter, *Iran and the World: Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 133.
4. R.K. Ramazani, *The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941: A Developing Nation in World Affairs* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1966), pp. 273-274.
5. Mehmet Gonlubol and Oral Sander (eds.), *Olaylarla Turk Dis Politikasi* (Ankara: AUSB Yay., 1987), pp. 251-271; Fuat Borovali, “Iran and Turkey: Permanent Revolution or Islamism in one Country,” in Miron Rezun (ed.), *Iran at the Crossroads* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), p. 82.
6. Borovali, “Iran and Turkey,” p. 84.
7. Suha Bolukbasi, *Turkiye ve Yakinindaki Ortadogu* (Ankara: Dis Politika Enstitusu Yay., nd.) pp. 8-10.
8. *Milliyet*, 13 February 1979. Ecevit feared Soviet intervention because the 1921 Agreement between Iran and Soviet Union gave the USSR the right to

interfere in Iran's internal affairs when developments deemed it necessary for Soviet security. The new regime in Iran immediately canceled this agreement in 1979.

9. For example Haluk Gerger stresses the anti-imperialist character and states that the "Iranian Revolution has a special place in the war between oppressed and oppressors." *Cumhuriyet*, October 3, 1980; See also the articles of Cengiz Candar, Haluk Ulman, and Ilhan Selcuk in the same newspaper.

10. Borovali, "Iran and Turkey," p. 85.

11. Philips Robins, *Turkey and Middle East* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), p. 54.

12. FBIS/WE, April 21, 1980.

13. Gunaydin, May 14, 1980.

14. Mansur Akgun, "Iran-Irak savasi, Bolge Dengeleri ve Turkiye," in Haluk Ulman (ed.), *Ortadogu Sorunlari ve Turkiye*, (Istanbul: TUSES Vakfi yay., 1990), p. 44.

15. *Cumhuriyet*, February 21, 1984.

16. George E. Gruen, "Turkey Between the Middle East and the West," in Robert O. Freedman (ed.), *The Middle East From Iran-Contra Affair to Intifada* (New York, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991), p. 410.

17. *Milliyet*, August 2, 1984.

18. *Turkey and World Foreign Trade, 1950-1993*, State Institute of Statistics of Turkey.

19. Bolukbasi, *Turkiye ve Yakinindaki*, pp. 24-25.

20. Bolukbasi, *Turkiye ve Yakinindaki*, pp. 23-25; *Turkey and World Foreign Trade, 1950-1993*.

21. Fuller, *The Center of the Universe*, p. 195.

22. Robins, *Turkey and Middle East*, p. 54.

23. FBIS/WE, October 22, 1984.

24. Robins, *Turkey and Middle East*, p. 54.

25. *Hurriyet*, August 16, 1986.

26. Borovali, "Iran and Turkey," p. 86.

27. While Iran did not favor an independent Kurdish state, it could be argued that Iran was more open to Kurdish autonomy or independent action in Iraq than was Turkey.

28. In most of the Turkish newspapers, it was possible to see such articles discussing a possible capture of these two cities by the Turkish Army. Some demanded an immediate capture, while others were against. These discussions can be seen almost in every Turkish newspaper during the years 1986, 1987, and 1988. For a most striking summary of the discussions see the articles of; Fahir Armaoglu in *Tercuman*, November 5, 1986; Talat Halman in *Milliyet*, November 17, 1986. Also see the commentaries in various newspapers during this period; *Yeni Gundem*, November 9, 1986; *Hurriyet*, November 4, 1986; *Milliyet*, October 13, 1986 and November 10, 1986; *Tercuman*, November 5, 1986; *Gunes*, November 10, 1986; and *Yeni Nesil*, January 23, 1987.

29. Borovali, "Iran and Turkey," p. 86.

30. Bolukbasi, *Turkiye ve Yakinindaki*, pp. 32-33.

31. Fuller, *The Center of the Universe*, p. 204.

32. Akgun, "Iran-Irak savasi," p. 50.

33. Quoted in Ergun Ozbudun, "Khomeinism-A Danger for Turkey," in David Menashri (ed.), *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 244-245.

34. Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 225.

35. Robins, *Turkey and Middle East*, p. 55.

36. One of the most striking example is Serhat Yucealtayli's article in *Yeni Forum*, a monthly Turkish journal, September 16-30, 1989. The article is titled "Iran kokenli Devrimci Shi'i Hareket" (Iranian backed Revolutionary Shi'i Movement), and especially focuses on the Iranian revolution and its supporters' propaganda activities in

Turkey, describing them as a serious challenge to the Turkish regime.

37. Quoted in Bolukbasi, *Turkiye ve Yakiniindaki*, p. 27.

38. See the articles on Iran under the name of "Yorum-Interpretation" wrote by Ercumend Ozkan; *Iktibas*, January 1981, May 1982, April 1984, May 1984, January 1985; *Girisim*, February 1986; Mehmet Kerim, *Iran Islam Devrimi* (Istanbul: 1987), pp. 7-9.

39. Kerim, *Iran Islam Devrimi*, p. 334.

40. *Iktibas*, Yorum, January 1984; Kerim, *Ibid.*, pp. 311-316.

41. *Iktibas*, "Iran Olaylarinin Gercekleri" (The Realities of the Iranian Affairs), September 30, 1981.

42. *Iktibas*, October 1981, April 1982, May 1984.

43. *Iktibas*, June 1983; *Girisim*, October 1985.

44. *Girisim*, December 1986. See especially the book written by Ilhan Kaya which completely focuses on the Iran-Contra Affair and claims that it was a US conspiracy to undermine Iranian influence in the region. Ilhan Kaya, *Iran Tuzagi; Bir Superin Dirami* (Istanbul: Nehir Yay. 1987).

45. *Yeni Asya*, January 18, 1979, January 27, 1979, March 17, 1979, February 2, 1979, and February 4, 1979. The history of conflict between Iranians and the inhabitants of Minor Asia actually goes back to the time of ancient Greece. Numerous classical texts describe wars between Greek city states (and colonies) and Persians; eventually, Macedonians invaded Anatolia and continued to conquer some parts of Persia. Later on, conflict between the Byzantine Empire and the Sasanids was followed by a similar conflict between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires.

46. *Kopru*, June 1987.

47. *Turkiye*, see the articles on Iran especially in January 9, 1979, January 17, 1979, January 20, 1979, and February 12, 1979.

48. *Milli Gazete*, the newspaper of the Welfare Party, January 22 and 29, 1979, February 3, 12, 15, and 19, 1979, March 1, 1979, April 1, 4, 13, and 17, 1979, May 1 and 23, 1979, June 3 and 15 1979 and in many articles in 1979. Also see its issues during June 4-6, 1989.

49. *Sebil*, see the articles on Iran in 1979.

50. Borovali, "Iran and Turkey," p. 89.

51. *Turkiye'de Anarsi ve Terorun Sebepleri* (Ankara: Yuksek Ogretim Kurulu yay., 1985), pp. 82-84.

52. Bolukbasi, *Turkiye ve Yakiniindaki*, p. 26.

53. Dilip Hiro, *Between Marx and Mohammed: The Changing Face of Central Asia* (Harper Collins Publishers, 1995).

54. Quoted in Robins, *Turkey and Middle East*, p. 56.

55. Robins, *Turkey and Middle East*, pp. 56-57.

56. FBIS/NES, March 12, 1989.

57. FBIS/NES, December 22, 1989.

58. However, with the Turkish-Israeli Military Training Agreement in 1995, Iranian criticism intensified. Iranian authorities periodically declared their opposition to the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement, holding that the agreement was a direct threat to the Islamic Republic of Iran.