

**B471. "Turkey Best Remain in the Middle East." Published in German as "Türkei soll Vorbild sein für Nahen Osten ." *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (December 1, 2004). Published in Dutch in *NRC Handelsblad* (December 7, 2004). Published in Hebrew in *Haaretz Daily* (December 19, 2004).**

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One should not reject Turkey membership in the EU on the grounds that it is an unsuitable member for this community of free nations but rather because one recognizes that precisely because Turkey has made considerable progress toward becoming a democratic society, it should assume its responsibility to lead the Middle East in the same direction. Moreover, promoting regionalism beyond the EU would fit well into the emerging multi regional global design. Thus, the Turkish people should not feel rejected by Europe but proud and challenged.

In effect, Turkey could play a role similar to Germany had in the formation of the EU when it worked with a nation that was previously its arch enemy, France. In the Middle East, Turkey has already moved in this direction by forming a rarely mentioned military and economic alliance with Israel, which included joint military maneuvers by the air force and navies of both sides, joint production of missiles, and intelligence sharing. A Turco Israel Free Trade Area accord was signed in 1996. And in 2003, the trade between these two nations reached the \$1.5 billion mark. Granted, this close relationship has been scaled back since the government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan took over, but it could be readily resurrected, especially once the Palestinians have their own state.

Other promising candidates for membership of the new regional community in the Middle East include Lebanon (particularly as Syrian control of this nation is reduced), Jordan (which in effect has considerable ties with Turkey and Israel), and eventually Egypt (as it reforms). And hopefully, a democratic Palestinian state could also join such a community, making for the equivalent of the Inner Six, the first members of the EU. Here too, the links may well first be economic, including freer trade and travel. Harmonization of laws and the formation of shared institutions could then follow. Above all, as in Europe, the best assurance that these nations will not war with one another, or support groups that would terrorize their neighbors, lies in their becoming members of one regional community, as they internally democratize.

In addition, it is far from obvious that the best way to proceed is for more and more nations to join the same community (i.e. the EU), leaving isolated those who do not qualify for membership because of one criterion or another. A more multipolar view of regionalism suggests itself, one in which various nations form a whole array of communities. For instance, the East Asian nations could forge a regional body of their own, which may find its beginnings in the Association of Southeast States. (Japan is promoting still another regional body in the area.) Similarly, Latin American or Central American nations could form their own community along the lines of MERCOSUR, rather than be encompassed in the North American, US-dominated grouping. Thus, a Middle Eastern community, serving as a democratizing magnet for other states in the region, would well complement such a global architecture.

There have always been those who worry that regional bodies may get into trade wars with one another, if not shooting ones. However, the experience so far has shown that regional bodies can work out trade disagreements at least as well as nation states and that they serve as political counterweights to one another. Furthermore, there are no signs that they

will challenge each other with armed forces.

Most importantly, in the longer run, the shrinking world-one of the rare clichés that has considerable sociological reality-will require increased global governing capacities for the growing number of transnational problems that cannot be handled on a national level, such as terrorism, infectious diseases, and computer viruses, to mention but a few. To proceed, one best take to heart the sociological insight that to form shared policies for large groups, it is best to first break them up into subgroups, each creating its own consensus. Then the representatives of these subgroups would meet to develop an overarching consensus. In effect, some movement along these lines is already discernable in the World Bank and the UN, where, instead of trying to involve all nations in every decision made, groups gain joint, regional representation. In short, a world of regional communities may well serve as a major stepping stone to forming some kind of effective, albeit limited, global governance.

Which brings us back to Turkey. Calling on it to lead the economic and political development of the Middle Eastern community fits well in a new global design. Moreover, such a development does not mean that Turkey will be denied ties to the EU-just as the EU has joined with other nations to form still larger international bodies, the European Council for instance. Nation states are not about to disappear; however, they will find that the more that they form regional communities, which then build bridges of their own, the better they, and in turn the inchoate world community, will be served.