



Policy Brief

The United Nations Security Council and Turkey Yalın Eralp

January 2009

***Summary:** Turkey became a non permanent member of the UN Security Council as of January 1, 2009. The Brief deals with the important functions of the Council and the election campaign which a candidate country to the Council may sometimes have to run. Five Security Council resolutions which have to various degrees changed the course of events are explained. More than that, the writer tries to portray the behind the scenes activities of the resolutions. Finally, by defining the atmosphere of the Council, the writer tries to give advice on what Turkey, as a non permanent member, should do and in particular the qualities which the Permanent Representative should possess.*

Turkey has been elected to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for a two-year period after half a century of great effort. What is the nature of the UNSC? What should Turkey do and not do in order to achieve success? Could history provide us with any light? Success means an increase in international prestige, while failure will be forgotten in the pages of history.

The Council has 15 members, 5 of which are permanent ones with veto power. The remaining 10 non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly (GA) for two-year terms on the basis of regions and the members' contribution to peace. What really matters here is regional distribution. For instance, if you belong to the "Western Europe and other" region, you cannot be elected from Africa. In the case that a

regional group has more candidates than the allocated number, and the matter cannot be resolved within the group, the General Assembly makes the decision. In 2008, when Turkey was elected, the "Western Europe and other" group put forward three candidates (Turkey, Austria, Iceland) instead of two; Turkey and Austria were elected by the GA. Whether any real attention is paid to the "contribution to peace" issue is questionable. The candidate will try all measures to get elected. Turkey too had made promises to many countries, although it is not clear which ones have been fulfilled.

Since it is responsible for peace and security, the Security Council (SC or the Council) is the most important organ of the United Nations (UN). According to Chapter 6 of the Charter, it is within the SC's power to investigate and

recommend methods of solving any dispute peacefully. More importantly, according to Chapter 7, not only it has the authority to determine the existence of a threat to peace or act of aggression, or to call on members to employ sanctions, its decisions are legally binding. For many countries, with the exception of self-defense, the Security Council is the only legitimate organ that can allow the use of force. All UN members are bound by the measures outlined in Chapter 7. The Council additionally has a say in the admission of new members and the appointment of the Secretary-General.

The Presidency of the Security Council is passed on from one member to another every month. In June 2009, Turkey will assume the Presidency.

Nine affirmative votes are sufficient for the decision of procedural matters at the Council. For all other (substantive) matters, in addition to the 9 affirmative votes, it is necessary that none of the five permanent members use their veto power. If one or more of these permanent members abstain from voting, it does not equal to a veto. For instance, the US abstained on the question of Gaza, but the Resolution was passed with 14 affirmative votes from the other members. As such, the weight is on the five permanent members. A veto from any of them leaves the Council stagnated. However, the five permanent members cannot pass resolutions unless they have support from at least four of the non-permanent members. That is why permanent members make an effort to gain the support of non-permanent members when they want to pass resolutions. Usually such undertakings occur in the capital cities of

relevant countries and, depending on the significance of the matter, at the higher level of diplomacy. On its part, the non-permanent member elected to the Council has to opt for restructuring at the center as well as for better internal coordination; a far away situation has become much closer and is now within its sphere of interest.

History Altering Resolutions

There are many resolutions, but some are truly significant. **In 1950, the Security Council condemned North Korea's invasion of South Korea with Resolution 82** and thus gave way to the establishment of UN Peacekeeping Operations. At the time the Soviet Union was protesting the Council on the grounds that Taiwan was representing China instead of China itself. The Resolution was passed thanks to this boycott. While some analysts have pointed out that the adoption of the Resolution was not fair due to the absence of the Soviet Union, it is worth remembering that abstention by a permanent member does not equal to a veto.

On March 3rd in 1964, the Council passed Resolution 186 on The Cyprus Question. The Resolution mentions the Government of Cyprus. Before the adoption of the Resolution, United Kingdom (UK) noted that the phrase should be understood to mean the Government of Cyprus in accordance with Constitution of Cyprus. The same point was made to the British government by Dr. Küçük, then Vice President of Cyprus, on March 9th, 1964. However, in time the Greek Cypriot government has become synonymous with the Constitutional

Government, and the future of Cyprus virtually changed. With that Turkey's EU history changed as well. Resolution 186 is a flawed decision. Looking back, the emerging impression is that the necessary effort was not put in.

May 18th 1967 is a significant date for the Middle East. At the time Egypt wanted the UN Peacekeeping forces, which were established in Sinai after the Suez Crisis of 1956, to leave. President Nasser announced that the Straits of Tiran will be closed to Israeli flagged ships. The world was tense, watching with extreme concern. UN Secretary-General U Thant asked Mr. Stavropoulos, a legal advisor, what needed to be done regarding the UN soldiers. The legal opinion he got for an answer was that Egypt was a sovereign state, and if they asked for the soldiers to leave, they would leave. Secretary-General withdrew the soldiers at the amazement of diplomats, making a grave and historic mistake.

Despite Nasser's declaration on May 26th that "we will declare total war on Israel," the general judgment was that Egypt did not actually want war. Documents that emerged later confirm this perception. Nevertheless, Egypt gathered 100 thousand soldiers and a thousand tanks in Sinai. Israel had declared before that it would consider Egypt's statements as declaration of war. Israel allowed the US some time for diplomacy, but struck preemptively on the morning of June 5th without waiting for a diplomatic outcome, destroying the Egyptian air force. Syria, Jordan and others unwillingly entered the war. Dubbed the Six-Day War, the conflict ended with devastation for Arabs, with loss of land, dignity,

soldiers and materials. The Egyptian tanks in Sinai had virtually become immobile, having to shell without moving. Such was the scenery; the world was surprised. Perhaps even Israel was surprised by its own victory. These were the circumstances under which the Security Council held emergency meetings, not once but many times. The Council's meetings were scene to clashing between the three powers. The permanent representative from the United States (US) was Arthur Goldberg, having served as Secretary of Labor under the Kennedy Administration, then Supreme Court Justice and then Ambassador to the United Nations. The Soviet Union was represented by Nikolai Fedorenko. Fedorenko was a great speaker and diplomat. He wore a bow tie and a different sports jacket everyday, and was quite handsome. The rumors at the time said that the bread he ate came from a Ukrainian bakery in San Francisco. Women loved him; he had an audience on TV. He got into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1939. He was a Western-type diplomat - on the outset he looked like Harvard professor. He was a charming man with likable behavior. At one point he turned to the American representative Goldberg and reminded him of the Russian proverb: "Even monkeys fall off trees."

Lord Caradon represented the UK. His real name was Sir Hugh Foot (who had served in Cyprus). His Baron title came later. He had immense diplomatic experience and oratory skills - a real English diplomat with his grey and navy suit. A fourth diplomat emerged and almost surpassed these three great orators: Abba Eban, Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs. Born

in South Africa, his rhetorical talent and command of English were hard to come by. Indeed, years later Kissinger would say "I have never known anyone else so masterful of English." Eban gave a remarkable speech at the Security Council. He spoke of the danger Israel was in and rebuked the Secretary-General for withdrawing the UN Peacekeeping forces from Sinai. Many people listening to that speech would take Israel's side. Eban assumed the position of a Minister not from a victorious country but one who has been defeated. Humor and wit are almost in the main menu of the Council. At one point, in response to an Arab ambassador yelling, Goldberg said "you either put up or shut up". The 1967 War proved once again that correcting mistakes in foreign policy is rather difficult. Nasser's mistake was also grave. The Council meetings did not deliver any results. Led by the US, Western countries prevented a resolution that the Arabs and the Soviets would have wanted. This led to the Soviets requesting an emergency GA meeting. The GA convened on June 19th. Prime Minister Kosygin and the legendary Minister of Foreign Affairs Gromyko were in attendance; even this was enough to show the importance given to the subject by the Soviets. This being the middle of the Cold War, the meeting turned into a broil between the US and the Soviet Union. Unlike expectations, Kosygin delivered a soft-spoken speech with a compromising tone. The goal was to get the member countries on the Soviet Union's side. The GA, which kept meeting until June 18th, did not come up with a resolution in line with Soviet expectations. Most of the resolutions included decisions of secondary importance. This was a heavy loss for Kosygin

and Gromyko. Following such incidences the blame is usually put on the ambassador, and this was the case here. Fedorenko was recalled and replaced with Jacob Malik. Unlike Fedorenko, Malik was a morose Politburo member.

Behind-the-curtains work continued in order to reach an agreeable resolution on the question of the Middle East, and one day a draft resolution emerged that was accepted by all parties. It was November 22nd, 1967. The resolution in question is the famous Resolution 242 that is still referred to today. The draft resolution was submitted to the Council by the UK (as the English play a major role in almost all international institutions). The Resolution passed, but the controversy over its interpretations continues to this day. The resolution included the sentence "withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied." However, the English language did not use the words "the" and "all", which would mean all occupied territory. The French version said "des territories," meaning "all territories", as the translators did not take notice of the difference. The Arabs immediately embraced the French version, but to no avail. The UN rules state that in the case that there are differences between two documents, the original (in English) is valid. The Arabs claimed they were deceived. British Foreign Minister George Brown said years later that he had showed the draft document to Arabs. Had he also told them what it meant? This would be an appropriate moment to remember those who criticize diplomats for paying too much attention to wording. Later there were rumors that the US representative Goldberg penned the draft resolution.

Documents reveal the role of Britain's talented permanent representative in the speedy adoption of the resolution concerning Falkland Islands in 1982. Upon hearing the news that Argentina was about to invade Falkland Islands in late March, the British Ambassador gathered the Security Council on April 1st and got the Council President from Zaire to make a statement calling on the parties to exercise moderation. The British Ambassador Anthony Parsons was ahead of his government. When the invasion actually took place on April 3rd 1982, Resolution 502 was passed, asking Argentina to withdraw its forces. Ambassador Parsons took a risk and prepared a "black draft", which is a draft resolution that needs to be voted on within 24 hours without making any changes on it. Convincing Prime Minister Thatcher, Parsons started working on non-permanent members. Meanwhile, France got Togo's support for Britain. Unable to get Jordan on his side, Ambassador Parsons got Prime Minister Thatcher to call King Hussein of Jordan and convince him. Countries like Uganda, Guinea and New Zealand were also on England's side. These are the kinds of situations where the stance of the non-permanent member is revealed. When Argentina refused to withdraw its forces, England's military operation began. The chronological order of events, namely the Ambassador's statement, Resolution 502, and the British military operation following Argentina's refusal to oblige, reveal Ambassador Parson's talent.

There is also the ultimatum-like Resolution 678, dated November 29th 1990, concerning Iraq ending its occupation of Kuwait. The second

paragraph of the "Acting under Chapter 7 of the Charter" part of the resolution mentions "the use of all necessary means" unless Iraq complies with the previous Security Council resolutions by January 15th 1991. In other words, the Council gave Iraq an ultimatum. While China abstained, Cuba and Yemen voted against the Resolution. The First Gulf War started right after January 15th 1991. At that time, the US was able to form a coalition against Iraq. In 2003, however, the US could not show the same ability, and some of her allies refused to stand by her.

Battle of Words

By the end of 1967, the permanent Ambassador from the Soviet Union was Jacob Malik. Everyone was used to Fedorenko, who was taken off the post; compared to him Malik seemed insipid. August 20th 1968: The possibility of reform movements led by Dubcek and his friends in Czechoslovakia spilling to other places bothered the Soviet Union. The Soviets, getting Poland, Hungary, East Germany and others by their side, occupied Czechoslovakia to end the Prague reforms. The Security Council convened immediately. The Soviets claimed they were invited by Prague to take action. The Czech ambassador Jan Muzik denied there was such an invitation. The US and the Western Europe group were working on the draft resolution, while Soviet ambassador Malik was trying to buy time for an invitation link from Prague. He was reading from a doctoral thesis on how the US was exploiting Latin America. The book would not end, and he could not be interrupted except for

Lord Caradon was given the floor when he said it was. Turning towards the Soviet Ambassador, Lord Caradon said it is obvious why they were trying to buy time, and suggested the thicker New York phone directory he brought with himself instead of the doctoral thesis. Malik was no Fedorenko; he was scattered after that and lost his coherence. The draft resolution prepared by the Western group condemning the Soviet Union was able to get the 9 necessary votes but stumbled at the Soviet veto. Hungary, which was the object of a similar occupation in 1956, voted in line with the Soviets. Years later, countries like Poland and Hungary that had participated in occupation would apologize to the Czechs.

International institutions have their own jargon and order. One cannot talk nonsense at the Security Council for hours. You could only do it as an exception, like in Malik's case. The General Assembly has been the site of speeches that last for hours. The Saudi Ambassador Baroodi could speak for hours with his extensive knowledge and command of English. I believe once he spoke for 9 hours. At times he did the same at the Council. He was born an Ottoman citizen; he loved and praised the Ottoman Empire. Thanks to his long speeches, the joke about him was that he "was paid by the hour."

There were fierce arguments in the GA on the question of Cyprus in 1965. Orhan Eralp is a master at such confrontations. Behind him, we were prepared for all kinds of rhetoric and any situation. At one point when the Greek (Cypriot) Ambassador Rossides said "Ataturk was for full independence, while you are against the full

independence of Cyprus," Ambassador Eralp (no relation to the author) replied, "Ataturk was for full independence but he did not try to patch up his country to another like you do." Faced with the draft resolution submitted to the SC by France during the second Cyprus operation in 1974, the sharp-tongued ambassador Osman Olcay protested, "What do we owe the sudden outburst of a country that has been long used to keeping its silence in the face of conflicts just as toxic as Cyprus? How many Mirage planes do we need to purchase to convince France?" If I remember correctly, Olcay said this in English despite his impeccable French, just to tease the French. convince France?" If I remember correctly, Olcay said this in English despite his impeccable French, just to tease the French.

Answers can sometimes be harsh at such meetings, especially if the initial statement is harsh as well. NATO is quite different from the UN; there are no long speeches or harsh remarks since all are allies. Are there no exceptions? There are. In 1974, during the second Cyprus operation, after condemning Turkey at the end of his speech, the British charge d'affaires said, "today Cyprus is confined by the Turkish army, tomorrow the Turkish army will be confined by Cyprus." Rather severe remarks. With his excellent English and quick wit, Orhan Eralp responded: "Cyprus is not Northern Ireland, and the Turkish army is not the British army."

Turkey on the Security Council

Starting on January 1st 2009, Turkey has become a member of the United Nations Security Council. These days the debate is on whether it is legal for Turkey to be represented by an ambassador past his retirement age, even with the title of "Presidential Advisor". In addition to this, there is also the question of to what extent has Turkey made its voice heard. Immediately following our election to the Council, the Prime Minister asserted that Turkey will be bringing regional problems to the Council. Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu, on the other hand, stated that Turkey will be active on all matters. Naturally, this is easier said than done. There is a difference between being active and being effective. In certain cases, bringing a problem to the Council before preparing the ground can cause more harm than good. In addition to the five permanent members, we should consider how compatible or incompatible Turkey will be with the other non-permanent members Austria, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Croatia, Japan, Libya, Mexico, Uganda and Vietnam. Proximity to Croatia and Austria could be employed as a tactic. In any case, Turkey should keep in mind that it was elected as part of the "Western Europe and other" group. While this does not amount to voting unanimously on all matters, needless collision should be avoided.

There is no information on Turkey's stance and statements on the Security Council on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website. Similarly,

there have not been any news reports or articles in the international media.

Turkey has assumed the Presidency of the North Korea Sanctions Committee (Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718). In addition, the ongoing civil war between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers has recently given way to a humanitarian crisis. The Security Council has not been able to adopt a resolution since Turkey, Russia, China, Vietnam, Libya and Japan have opposed it. In the end, there was a statement from the Secretary-General that did not have the weight of a resolution. Turkey's and Russia's concerns regarding Kurds and Chechens respectively, as well as China's principle of non-interference in its internal affairs may be understood. Japan's stance however is a total question mark. Indeed, the International Crisis Group called for increased pressure on Japan regarding this situation.

It is said that diplomacy is the art of saying the harshest things in the most pleasant way possible. While the language of politicians and diplomats differ somewhat, what they have in common is the lack of luxury to express everything that comes to mind and the tip of tongue.

The United Nations is a stage, on which diplomats are artists. While the repute of the country behind you matters, the ambassador's command of the language, his or her ability to speak impromptu, quickwit and behind-the-curtain skills matter a great deal as well. Sometimes the fame of the ambassador can even

precede that of his or her country. There are no more Abba Ebons, Fedorenkos, Caradons or Parsons. Are there new ones? With no command of the language, ability to speak impromptu, quickwit, credibility or behind-the-curtain skills, two years can go by more quickly than one can realize.

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Yalım Eralp is a member of the High Advisory Board at the Global Political Trends Center, a faculty member at the Department of International Relations of Istanbul Kültür University and a diplomatic commentator at CNN TÜRK. Yalım Eralp was born in 1939 in Istanbul. In 1958, he graduated from Forest Hills High School, New York City. In 1962, he graduated from the Faculty of Political Sciences, Ankara. Between 1962-1983, he served as a diplomat in New York, Greece, and in Rome NATO Defense College from where he graduated. Later on, he was appointed as Counselor at the Turkish Delegation within NATO, Brussels. He served in Washington D.C. as the Deputy Chief of Mission. Having served as the Spokesman of the Ministry for four years, he became Ambassador to India in 1987. Between 1991-1996, Ambassador Eralp served as Principal Advisor to Prime Ministers Mesut Yılmaz and Tansu Çiller and was also the Director of NATO Affairs at the Ministry. In 1996, he became Ambassador to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Delegation in Vienna. In 2000, Ambassador Eralp retired from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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Global Political Trends Center (GPoT) was established as a research unit under the auspices of Istanbul Kultur University in 2008.

GPoT Center aims to produce innovative and distinctive policy recommendations by analyzing the contemporary trends in regional and international politics.

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