

Is It Realistic/Realizable? The West Asian Union Project

E. Cüneyt AKALIN^①

(Political scientist, Arel University, İstanbul, Turkey)

Abstract: *West Asia has been the bridge between Asia and Europe. The historical "Silk Road" beginning in China and ending in different ports and cities of West Asia formed the socio-economic infrastructure of Eurasian commercial and cultural relations. West Asia lost its strategic location after the discovery of sea-routes in the 16th century but regained importance with the progress realised in transportation in the 20th century (highways, railways-airways, etc.) The discovery of rich petroleum reserves reinforced its importance. West Asian region, covering Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Azerbaijan and others can augment and fasten its economic-cultural progress by developing solidarity and forming regional unions. The regional union, besides upgrading the well-being of neighbouring nations, can also contribute to the stability and security of the area which is actually the most problematic and chaotic area in the world.*

Key Words: *West Asia; Pipe-lines; Middle East; US Intervention*

Eurasia, consisting of Asia and Europe, is a huge geography, in different parts of which billions of people live. West Asia which constitutes a big and special part of Eurasia is and has always been a bridge between Europe and Asia, in fact, in Nehru's words, "a highway".

Eurasia has a rich history because it is the birthplace of many

^① Dr. E. Cüneyt AKALIN, professor of political science, Arel University, İstanbul, Turkey; Email: ecuneytakalin@gmail.com.

civilisations. First of all, it dominated the pre-capitalist world: before the rise of capitalism, Asia used to be the wealthiest part of the globe. All the big religions and teachings were born there. In other words, Eurasia created most of the material and spiritual wealth of mankind up to modern times.

Now, Eurasia, which is threatened by terror, radicalism and sectarianism, is a region where big powers fight for hegemony. In this fight, millions of people, even whole nations are oppressed politically, militarily and economically and are forced to migrate. Therefore, the need to consider the solidarity among West Asian countries and the Union of West Asia more seriously becomes a pressing issue.

I. Introduction

1) The Terms West Asia and Eurasia

Where is West Asia situated and what does this term signify? Is there a difference between the regions commonly defined by the term Middle East and the term West Asia? Where is Eurasia? The conceptualisation of an element is vital to the understanding of the problem surrounding it. Let us move to the “argumentum a contrario” and see ‘what is not’ ‘West Asia’ at present and what it was not in the past.

The term “Eurasia” was first advanced by the German linguist Alexander von Humboldt (Dugin, A., 2007: 16). Humboldt designed the totality of Asia and Europe. The term was first used in Russia by the geographer V.I. Lamansky (1833-1914). But Eurasia is not only a geographic term designating the totality of the territories. Eurasia is a vision, a kind of intellectual resistance against the Western hegemonic thinking. Eurasionists called the people to fight against the “general nightmare of Europeanism” in the past (Dugin, A., 2007: 16). According to Eurasianists, Russian culture is not a part of European culture but a *sui generis* culture, in which both the East and the West meet.

1. Middle East: Evolution of the Term

Whoever has an idea about the “Silk Road” knows that the historical end-points of this big trade route were the prosperous harbours of the Eastern Mediterranean, such as Alexandria, Saida, Sur, Alexandretta, İzmir, İstanbul, Trabzon and the Eastern cities of trade such as Isfahan, Tabriz and Baku. These cities had been the cultural contact points of East-West, as well.

The term Middle East is rather new and was invented for strategic aims and by actors outside the region. Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, US naval officer and strategist, identified the area stretching from China to the Mediterranean which lay between 30 and 40 degrees’ latitudes as the “Debated and Debatable Middle Strip” (Mahan, A., 1900: 47).

Middle East regained importance in the beginning of the 20th Century. By 1912, oil had begun to replace coal in the British navy, and Britain was obviously anxious to find dependable supplies of oil. Winston Churchill, the First Lord of Admiralty, was supposed to have delivered one of his first quotable quotes, when he declared, during World War I, that “We are prepared to shed a drop of blood for every drop of oil.” At the end of the War, Britain had secured the League of Nations mandates over the former Ottoman territories of Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq. Churchill, by then the Secretary of States for Colonies, set up in the Foreign Office a Middle Eastern Department to supervise the same (Dietl, G., 2012: November 14-16).

During World War II, the British began to use the term “Middle East” with reference to all Asian and North African lands to the west of India. No definite boundaries were ever set to the term. “The Middle East Command and the Middle East Supply Centre were established and the Minister of State in the Middle East was appointed during the war, nonetheless.”^①The acceptance of the term was universal by then. In US official documents

① US Congress 85. Session 1, Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Armed Services, The President s Proposal on the Middle East (1957), Pt. 1, pp.23-24, quoted by Gulshan Dietl, “Naming and Claiming a Region” .

published by US State Department called “Foreign Relations of US”, Turkey which was initially grouped within the Near East category of the State Dept. sections, was later moved to Eastern Europe.^① This is also, no need to explain, a political categorisation which has its origins in the Cold War.

2. The Term, “Middle East” contested

Two leaders in the postcolonial world found the terms offensive. Each reacted in his own characteristic way: Jawaharlal Nehru with a righteous assertion, Mao Zedong with a mocking question. As for Mao, once, when a journalist used the term “Far East” in the course of his interview, he reportedly asked him, almost in a whisper, “Far from whom?”. As a result, thereof, or for some unknown reason, the term Far East is extinct; whereas the Middle East is almost the only term used for the region, whose precise borders have remained fluid so that the inhabitant or the observer draws them to suit his purposes.

Nehru coined the word “West Asia”, which is the official term used by India and by many countries in Asia today. It is a correct description geographically, but is not used, and at times not understood, outside India. It denotes all the Arab countries in Asia plus Turkey, Iran and Israel. It is a correct geographic description of the region, but the absence of Egypt renders the region incomplete (Dietl, G., 2012: November 14-16).

3. Capitalist egocentrism in naming

Egocentrism is not only naming the world according to a certain “centre”. The Capitalist World, after colonisation, has intended to rewrite history by situating itself in the centre of the world. The 19th century was a turning point. Up to the 19th Century, there existed in Europe, a rather correct understanding of Indian, Chinese and Asian civilisations. The books of great Islamic scholars were taught in European Universities. There was no doubt or dispute about the size of the Chinese economy. The

^① Turkey appears in Near East groupings up to the beginning of 1950’s in US State Dept. Papers. Later on it is catheterized in Eastern Europe groupings. <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS>.

celebrated English thinker Adam Smith in his book, *The Wealth of Nations*, does not argue the superiority of the Chinese economy. Not only economy but from science to politics, the attention of the World was essentially directed towards the East. Averroes'^① *El Kanun el Tib* was the main textbook in medical schools.

The general perception changed with the Eurocentric era. The West, very much involved in the colonisation of Asia, felt the necessity to rewrite history, because they needed to create "moral" and "rational" pretexts for their policies. To them, only westerners were capable of everything and the other people on the earth were incapable of creating/producing/achieving anything. It was European responsibility to "develop" and "civilize" these people. According to this reading of the epoch, all the positive steps from Ancient Greece to Rome had all been taken from the West. The indigenous peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America were, from the very beginning, lazy sleepyheads lacking "professional ethics". Thus, it was inevitable that the West form a domination over them.

Great struggles were waged against colonialism and imperialism radically changed Western prejudices. India, China, most of Asian African countries had been liberated by the 1950-60s. The Third World, created by the liberation of old colonies became a big international reality. Solidarity among these countries augmented.

II. The Historical Importance of West Asia

West Asia is the birth place of human civilisation. History appeared there 7,000 years ago. (The area corresponds to modern Iraq.) Babylonians, Assyrians and later on the Achaemenes of Persia imposing their will on the whole of the Middle East from the Indian frontier to Egypt were the first masters of civilisation. Chinese Emperor Wu of Han Dynasty acquired the control of Central Asia and his victory opened the route (Silk Road) between

① Philosopher and scientist Averroes is known as İbn Rüşd in the muslim world.

China and Central Asia.

“Great Kings” of Persia, Cyrus, Darius and Xerxes threatened Greece. A curious incident took place during Alexander’s reign when, in this meeting-place of Asia and Europe, he planned what has been called a “marriage” of the two continents. He, although he had a few wives already, married the daughter of the Persian King, and thousands of Alexander's officers and soldiers also married Persian girls. After Alexander, Greek culture prevailed in West Asia from the Indian frontier to Egypt for many centuries (Nehru, J., 1934: 750). The power of Rome arose during this period, and it spread towards Asia. The Roman Empire itself split up into two as the Western and the Eastern with Constantinople becoming the seat of the latter. The old struggle between the East and the West continued on these plains of western Asia. And throughout this time great caravans of people, carrying merchandise on the backs of camels, crossed these plains from east to west and from west to east, for the *Middle East was then one of the world's greatest highways* (Nehru, J., 1934: 751).

1) Great philosophical teachings and religions

Great religions saw the light of the day in Western Asia, –Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam. Before them, Gautama (Buddha) and Confucius had spread their views. Sufism was also born in Asia.

Arab civilization had waned before the Seljuk Turks, and was finally crushed by the successors of Genghis Khan. But before the Mongols came west a fierce struggle had already begun on the western coasts of Asia between the Christian West and the Muslim East (Nehru, J., 1934: 751). These were the Crusades, which lasted for 250 years. These Crusades are looked upon as wars of religion, which they were. But religion was more of an excuse for the wars than a cause. The people of Europe in those days were less developed, compared to the East. This attraction towards the East took many shapes, and among these the Crusades were the most important. As a result of these wars, Europe learnt much from the Asiatic countries. It learnt many fine arts and crafts and habits of

luxury, and, what was more important, methods of scientific work and thought (Nehru, J., 1934: 751).

In the huge Mongolian empire, the old caravan routes became safe to travel on, and not only merchants but diplomats, religious missionaries and others went up and down on their long journeys. The Middle East was directly on the line of these ancient world highways: *it was the link between Asia and Europe* (Nehru, J., 1934: 7502). Great travellers of the past, like Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta made invaluable observations about Eastern Mediterranean/West Asia.

The Ottoman Turks took possession of Constantinople and spread all over the Middle East, including Egypt. They did not encourage continental trade, partly because this trade was in the hands of their rivals in the Mediterranean, the Venetians and the Genoese. Trade itself used new ways, for new sea routes were opened, and these sea routes took the place of the old land caravan routes. So these land routes across Western Asia, which had served well for many thousands of years, fell into disuse, and the lands through which they had passed faded into unimportance (Nehru, J., 1934: 752).

For nearly 400 years, from early sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth, the sea routes were all-important, and they dominated the land routes, especially where there were no railways, and there were no railways in Western Asia. Shortly before the World War, proposals were made, backed by the German Government, for a railway connecting Constantinople to Baghdad. When the war ended in 1918, Britain was supreme in Western Asia (Nehru, J., 1934: 753).

After the war, many important cities of Western Asia were connected with the railway system to Europe and Egypt, and were thus easily accessible. British policy had long aimed at controlling these routes in Asia and Africa. The African route was meant to go right across the African continent from Cairo to Cape Town in the far south and these two new railways in western Asia, the Baghdad and the Hejaz, were largely controlled by the British.

Another short railway was being built in Arabia between Jeddah, a port in the Red Sea, and Mecca. This was quite convenient for the tens of thousands of pilgrims who went to Mecca every year.

The motor-car took very readily to the desert, and rushed along the same old caravan routes along which camels had trudged for thousands of years. Now, of course, there is the airplane, which is both cheaper and far swifter and Western Asia again becomes a meeting-place of these great air routes.

2) The specific characteristics of West Asia

Two historically important states, Turkey and Iran are the main political actors of the region. Israel, backed by England and US was formed in 1948 on the Palestinian territory and has lived actually as a marginalised state in this region because of its anti-Arab policies.

West Asia is at the juncture of Asia and Europe. It is the cross-roads of the sea-lines and the classical trade lines. It is on the energy corridor. West Asia is rich in petroleum. It is on the intersection of three big continents, the meeting point of many different cultures and the birth place of monotheistic great religions. It is a very special area, not comparable to others.

With the words of the Indian ex-prime minister, Nehru: "Western Asia is very different from Eastern Asia and from India. In the distant past, many races and tribes came from Central Asia and the East and overran it. Turks themselves came in this way. Before the Christian era, Buddhism also spread right up to Asia Minor but it does not appear to have taken root there. Western Asia has, during the ages, looked more towards Europe than towards Asia or the East. In a way, it has been Asia's window to Europe. Even the spread of Islam in various parts of Asia did not make much difference to the Western Outlook" (Nehru, J., 1934: 482).

This very special historical region, after the discovery of rich petroleum reserves in the late 19th century, has become a big conflict area among imperialist forces. The founding of Israel deepened the crisis between Arabs and the West. Israel's existence

gave birth to all kinds of reactionary politics, especially radical Islam and then to terrorist organisations like El Kaida and lately ISID.

On the other hand, the intervention of the US to the region after 9/11 and during the Gulf Crisis created big reactions. West Asia is actually the main resistance area against imperialist forces.

Each action creates its own reaction. The intervention of the US in the region, the division of Iraq and Syria helped the nations of the region consider solidarity among them.

III. Disintegration of the Soviet Union and “New World Order”

The Soviet Union had become an important political actor of the region by 1947. England, in the post-war period realised that she was incapable of keeping the West Asia under control. The US replaced Britain. The Soviet Union, by backing nationalist forces against the British colonialists, gained popularity in the region especially after the Suez Canal Crisis in 1956. New-born national Arab states, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Algeria, had close economic-political and sometimes military relations with the Soviet Union.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, political conditions and political terminology have also changed. The single superpower, US wanted to dictate a “new world order” and was ready to do everything to achieve her goals. Turkey found herself in the middle of in two consecutive Gulf crises.

The First Gulf Crisis of 1991 aimed at eliminating Iraq’s Saddam Hussein and creating the division of Iraq. Meanwhile, Yugoslavia, Turkey’s neighbour in the Balkans was also being divided on ethnical and religious grounds. The map of the West Asia was being redesigned by the West and in particular by the US. This was an alarming situation for the West Asian countries.

The ideological dimension of this operation was more important than the arms used in it. These concepts were developed

by Western ideologists (journalists, academicians etc.). Concepts such as democracy, human rights, international cooperation, free exchange of goods, market economy were used frequently by Western powers to divide Iraq, Yugoslavia, even Iran. The term "Middle East" and "new world order" were also largely used.

1) The Greater Middle East Project.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, it was generally assumed that the European areas of the Union together with the East European states would eventually reintegrate the European state system and the Asian territories would revert back to the Third World.

A few months after the US intervention in Iraq, in August 2003, the national security advisor to the US president, later secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice was pointing at the West Asia "a region of 22 countries with a combined population of 300 million" as a target to be transformed (Rice, C., 2003: August 7).

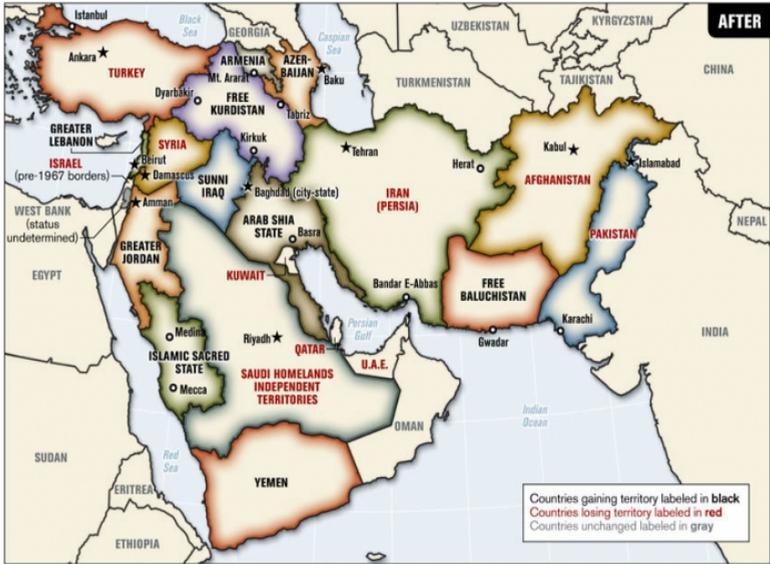
A new term, "the Greater Middle East", was created in that period. As the Iraqi War was launched, there were pretensions of "civilizing and democratizing" the region. "The Greater Middle East Initiative" urged the states in the region to adopt major political reforms and be held accountable for human rights. It offered an expanded political and security engagement in return. The draft was leaked to the press before its formal presentation at the G8 Summit to be held in Sea Island, Georgia in June 2004. The Greater Middle East was defined to include the Arab states, Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey.

The term "New Middle East" was introduced to the world in June 2006 by then US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in replacement of the old term the "Greater Middle East" (Nazemroaya, M., 2006: November 18).

In fact, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a huge chaotic geography was formed starting from Eastern Europe to the Pacific Ocean (Perinçek, D., 1996: 109). "Greater Middle East" is a US project to control the region.

2) "Greater Middle East Project" Maps

This map was first published by retired Colonel Ralph Peters in *US Armed Forces Review* in 2006. Peters' claim was that the new map should be drawn according to the demands of the minorities. This meant a redrawing of the map of the region.



In other words, the term Middle East became an instrument in the hands of US superpower in redefining the region. Then, as a reaction to the term "Middle East" and to the erroneous concepts of different Western powers, revolutionary and progressive people of the region became more attached to the term West Asia. The term started to mean solidarity and friendship among oppressed people. Thus, the term has come to mean more than a geographical definition.

IV. West Asian Union

1) Main countries of West Asia

Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Azerbaijan are the main countries and actors of the region. Turkey and Iran, with populations of roughly 80,000,000 people each, are the most populated countries of the region. Throughout history Turkey and Iran have lived as

independent, sovereign countries. Iraq and Syria obtained their independence after the World wars. Azerbaijan was an ex-Soviet republic. Lebanon, which was created by dividing Syria and Jordan created by dividing Palestine are also located in the region. Egypt, the biggest Arab country, has a special place in this region as it joined the region to the continent of Africa.

Most of the Arab countries comprising mainly a total population of 150 million people live in this region (Mashreq in Arabic, meaning Arab countries living in the region whereas Arabs living in North Africa are called Maghreb) West Asia is connected to the rest of the world by land and 5 big seas. The Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean form the infra-structure of sea-ways and the trade between the East and the West. Thus, a Turkish writer named the region “5 Countries 5 Seas” (Gültekin, M., 2014). Many politicians of the region share the same definition. A journalist interviewing Bashar Assad wrote that the Syrian president considers the 5 seas (the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean) as the foundation to unite the peoples of the region) (Özçelik, İ., 2012: October 12). This is only a brief description of the region. Other Caucasian countries, such as Georgia, Armenia, Lebanon, Jordan and Red Sea area can also be included in the general picture.

Five main countries of West Asia shared the same destiny and were subject to the same aggression. In other words, US intervention (economic, military, political) to Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and now to Yemen led the actors of the region to get together. It is not easy for countries to get organized but let us not forget that the unifying factors are also important. They are:

Geographical proximity: Geographical proximity is an important factor in regional unions. Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan and others are in close proximity. Because of this geographical positioning, these countries have lived more or less under the same political units or entities even in the past.

The decomposition of Turkey, Syria/Lebanon-Palestine and

Iraq is rather recent. These countries were together up to 1918. They lived together for 400 years under the Ottoman rule. This old co-habitation is of course different from the union of equal and sovereign countries. However, historical proximity creates a historical and cultural common basis for today's efforts for a union. Geographical proximity brought economic, cultural and even social ties. There is no other explanation for the division between Adana (Turkey) and Latakia (Syria), Beirut (Lebanon) and Tartus (Syria), Antep (Turkey) and Aleppo (Syria), Baku (Azerbaijan) and Tehran (Iran), Basra (Iraq) and Bandar Abbas (Iran) besides the border lines drawn either artificially or under pressure. What is more natural than all these cities and their home countries integrating in the same union that covers all (Gültekin, M., 2014: 37).

The present trend that is actually taking place is this process. These regions and these cities could and would develop close relations if it were not for the interference of imperialists.

Common Cultural values: The countries of West Asia and their cultures have been formed through centuries since Mesopotamia. Most of the peoples of West Asia are Muslim; and this factor can also be a unifying common point.

The democratic revolutions of the oppressed world rose up here in this region, parallel to China and Mexico. We are referring to the Russian Democratic Revolution of 1905, to Iran's Constitutional revolution of 1906, to the Turkish Democratic Revolution of 1908. The Turkish National Liberation War after the First World War got the general support of the oppressed World and especially the support of the peoples of West Asia. It contributed to the hopes of a common future.

Culturally, Turks are more similar to Persians, Kurds and Arabs, rather than other nationalities. The great Turkish linguist Mahmut of Kasgar said in the 11th century: "A head needs a hat and a Turk needs a Persian."^① Relations between Turks and

^① "Börksüz baş Farssız Türk olmaz," in Kaşgarlı Mahmud, *Dîvânü Lugati't-Türk*.

Persians have existed since the very early years of history which *Shehnameh* (the masterpiece of Persian literature) deals with. A significant percentage of the population of Iran are of Turkish origin. The rest are Persians who are used to living together with Turks.

The unity with Arabs has more common points than only sharing the same religion. A Turk never feels like a stranger in Iraq and Syria. These countries are also the homes of Turcomans. *Nauruz*, the traditional celebration of the revival of nature in spring, is a common festival. *Kava*, *Zaloğlu Rüstem*, *Hallac-ı mansur*, *Nesimi*, *Nasreddin Hodja*, *Ömer Khayyam*, *Avicenna*, *Fuzuli*, *Hatemi* are all personages who reflect the common sentiments of all these peoples.

Shared Political Situation and Similar Military Objectives: Iraq has faced two consecutive American interventions in the last 20 years. Presently, Iraq is dealing with the problems created by this intervention. Syria is trying to resist ethnic, sectarian terrorism supported by the US.

Iran has been under US threat since the US embargo and military aggression. Iran's governance, in other words, its political system, which contains many religious elements, is not a great obstacle against the efforts of unification, as the recent political developments have shown. Iran's closest supporters in the World of 2000's are Chavez of Venezuela, the People's Republic of China, Revolutionary Cuba, and Russia. *Mazdek's*, *Firdevsi's*, *Omar Khayyam's*, *Sadi's*, *Hafız's* country is too great to be imprisoned within Mediaeval dogmas.

In fact, it can be asserted that the main target of imperialist aggression in the region is Turkey. Turkey has faced ethnic separatist terror for 30 years: a hidden aggression up to 2001 and an overt aggression since 2007 has even targeted the Turkish Army. If we look at the question from a different angle, we notice that this aggression has become a military question. The objective of the imperialist powers is to divide the country on ethnical and religious grounds.

Similarities of economic systems. The economic model which Turkey applied in the 1930's appears to be a unique model for all the states of the region. The essentials of the system consist of promotion of the national industry and agriculture, the control of foreign currency, an industrialisation led by the state, the amelioration of the economic relations with the rest of the world on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. With the collapse of neo-liberal economic policies, the main trend has once more become the statist model all over the world.

2) Economic potential of West Asian countries:

Economic cooperation has been the first step for greater unions since German "Zollverein" (customs union) since the 19th Century. It is important to consider the economic potential of the region.

The GNP (Gross National Product) of West Asian countries are as follows: (roughly) (Gültekin, M., 2014: 181)

<u>Country</u>	<u>GNP (billion \$)</u>
Turkey	1,000
Iran	930
Iraq	160
Syria	130
Azerbaijan	90
	-----2,310.

This economic picture represents the 6th biggest economic unit of the world after EU, the US, China, India and Japan. Let us not forget that Iran has faced embargo for years, Iraq and Syria are at war. In other words, the real economic potential of the region is much bigger.

Petroleum and Natural gas production (Gültekin, M., 2014: 183)

<u>Country</u>	<u>Petroleum product</u> <u>(billion barrel)</u>	<u>Natural gas product</u> <u>(billion m3/ year)</u>
Iran	4.2	400

Iraq	3	17
Syria	0.4	24
Azerbaijan	8	26

West Asia is the richest area as far as petroleum reserves are concerned. Besides, it is estimated that petroleum and natural gas will be the essential inputs of industry all around the world for at least half a century.

On the other hand, West Asian countries have a great potential to use solar energy.

Volume of Foreign Trade of West Asian countries

Turkey does not have petroleum and natural gas sources but has the biggest economy of the region. Here are the figures (Gültekin, M., 2014: 181):

<u>Country</u>	<u>Exports (billion \$)</u>	<u>Imports (billion \$)</u>
Turkey	152	250
Iran	132	76
Iraq	80	48
Syria	12	14
Azerbaijan	27	10

So, the foreign trade volume of the region is roughly \$800 billion, which cannot be disregarded. Turkey which applies neo-liberal economic policies is the only country among them which has a deficit in foreign trade.

3) West Asia: cross-roads of pipe-lines.

Disintegration of the Soviet Union created new opportunities for the transportation of Central Asian and Iranian petroleum to the markets of West Europe and Asia. Thus, Turkey and Iran have become the cross-roads of the transportation of petroleum and natural-gas pipelines.

1. Bakü-Tibilisi-Ceyhan pipeline:

Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan



One of the first pipeline projects realised after the Berlin Wall was Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, which aimed to transport Caspian petroleum to Western markets via the Mediterranean.

The Baku-Ceyhan pipeline is about 1700 km. in length. (250 km in Georgia, 450 km in Azerbaijan and 1000 km in Turkey). After long discussions, an agreement was signed in 1999 and the pipeline became operational in 2006.

The capacity of the pipeline has been augmented to 70 million tons/per year.

The percentage of the total petroleum revenue within the Azerbaijani budget is about 50%. Petroleum export covers 90% of the Azeri exports. This figure proves how important this-pipeline is within Azerbaijani economy.

2. The Blue Stream (Russia-Turkey)



The Blue Stream gas pipeline is designed to supply Russian gas directly to Turkey via the Black Sea.

The pipeline has significantly increased the reliability of gas supplies to Turkey and promoted the development of the gas market and the gas infrastructure in the country. It is also able to cover the peak demand growth in Turkey, associated with low temperatures regularly observed during the winter.

The total length of the Blue Stream pipeline is 1213 km, design capacity 16 billion cubic meters of gas a year.

In March 2014, the Blue Stream gas pipeline supplied its 100th billion cubic meter of Russian natural gas to Turkey.

V. From National States to Regional Unions

Many discuss and compare the European Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation which are considered as two successful examples of regional unions.

In the last few decades, regional unions have arisen in all parts of the world. The nation states formed during the 19th and 20th centuries have proved insufficient in terms of resistance to economic, political and military pressures applied by the great world powers. Thus, forming regional cooperation organisations has become an urgent need.

The countries involved in these processes have, no doubt, many common characteristics. But even more important than this is the answer to the main question: What is the objective for a union? What kind of target do we intend to reach? A union that we target, will be shaped according to our objectives.

The same question is still in front of Turkey after the US intervention in the region. Will Turkey go on putting up with the aggressive and hegemonic policies of the US and harm our neighbours or will she contribute to the "West Asian Union"? Will it be a democratic and independent Turkey or a country under the dictatorship of capitalism, governed by reactionary politicians?

Now, the question of greatest importance in Asian territory is to put down an alternative system based on the rejection of the exploitation and oppression and the individualistic values of the West. This is why Turkey, will likely turn her face not to the West but to the East. Let us be clear: East is the east of the Atlantic; in other words, Turkey's choice will be Eurasia.

1) Turkey and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)

The West Asian Union project is not totally a new project for the region.

The regional states tried to form other political and economic organisations for mutual interest. Their experiences have valuable lessons for new initiatives. An ongoing fact of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) is a political and economic intergovernmental organisation which was founded in 1985 in Tehran by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. It provides a platform to discuss ways to improve development and promote trade and investment opportunities. The objective is to establish a single market for goods and services, much like the European Union. ECO's secretariat and cultural department are located in Tehran, its economic bureau is in Turkey and its scientific bureau is situated in Pakistan.

The Economic Cooperation Organization was the successor organisation of what was the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), founded in 1964, which ended its activities in

1979. In 1985 Iran, Pakistan and Turkey joined to form the ECO. By the fall of 1992, the ECO expanded to include seven new members; Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The status and power of the ECO is growing. However, the organization faces many challenges. Most importantly, the member states are lacking appropriate infrastructure and institutions which the Organization is primarily seeking to develop, to make full use of the available resources in the region and provide sustainable development for the member nations. The Economic Cooperation Organisation Trade Agreement (ECOTA) was signed on July 17, 2003 in Islamabad. ECO Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) is a new organization for trade promotion among member states located in Iran (2009).

Turkey, along with Pakistan and Iran, is one of the three founding members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). ECO, which is generally summarized as a commercial and trade oriented organization, provides a platform that brings Turkey and the Central and South Asian States together. ECO currently has 10 members.

Seventeen years after its expansion, the working principles of ECO have been regulated and its institutional framework has largely been completed. The organizational structure of ECO comprises a Secretary General (SG) and Seven Directorates which operate under the guidance of the SG. 66% of the current ECO budget is being financed equally by the three founding members. In this respect, Turkey finances 22% of ECO's budget (Turkey's annual contribution equals to \$643.335).

2) Turkey: Where does Turkey belong?

Turkey's case is slightly different from other West Asian countries. Turkey has a small territory in Europe (Trakya) and has important economic and cultural ties with Western Europe. Moreover, Turkey is a member of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) and was accepted into Europe's integration by being a founding member of the "European Council". Turkey's

application for full membership to EU is an ongoing process. Turkey has been attached to the European Union for more than 60 years but has not yet been accepted into the Union. It is obvious that Turkey has not found a place in Europe.

The European Union puts pre-conditions called the “Copenhagen criteria” before the candidates. Formulated essentially for ex-socialist Eastern European countries, the Copenhagen criteria are: democracy, rule of law, a functional liberal market, respect for human rights.

Turkey has a “multiparty democracy” much older, a democracy much more developed than East European countries. No need to say, Turkey is much more experienced in liberal market economy. However, her candidacy is being continuously obstructed. This double standard can only be explained by European prejudices against a West Asian country.

3) West Asian Union instead of European Union for Turkey

The European Union is the organization of imperialist countries which have created a totally different culture, the elements of which, like Christianity, are more or less shared by the members.

If Turkey opts for the Oppressed World, the balance of power will be affected seriously and this is why the US forces Turkey to keep up the EU Project and this is also where the EU authorities stand. France and Germany, two pillars of the European Union have declared that their stand is not to accept Turkey into Europe as an equal member. They propose a status they name “privileged partnership” which is very much different from being a member on equal grounds. However, the economic crisis and xenophobia in Europe affecting the European Union pushes Turkey to clarify her position. The Turkish public opinion, very favourable towards the EU 10 years ago, has totally changed to disfavour.

4) From West European Union to Eurasian Union^①

^① Eurasia is a rather new concept in the Turkish political literature. One of the first books on Eurasia named “Eurasian Alternative” was written by Doğu Perinçek on 1995.

In fact, Western Asia is a part of the great Asian continent. The trend of unification is progressing towards covering the whole of the Asian continent. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation founded in 1995 has realised important progress since its foundation. Turkey's degree of adherence has also been upgraded.

Regional unions in Asia will not block the progress of any country; on the contrary, they will be an encouraging factor. The Russian Federation formed a customs union with Belarus and Kazakhstan (The Eurasian Customs Union). Also, China formed a common economic area with more than 10 countries. West Asian Union, like the others named above, will be a new community.

West Asian Union can be initially formed by Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Azerbaijan. The door of the union should be kept open to other regional countries as well. A Turkish author's book cover called "5 Countries, 5 Seas" represents the nucleus of the West Asian Project.

The struggle of the oppressed world brings solidarity and unity onto the agenda. Regional units are the first steps of this process. Eurasia is a very big geography. It seems that the way leading to the Eurasian union will have to rise stepping up on secondary and smaller unions. Geographical proximity is the basis of many common elements. This is why "West Asian Union" is on Turkey's agenda.

VI. Conclusion

It is clear that the American invasion of Iraq will not last long, because peoples have learned a lot in this invasion. Syria is fighting against ethnic and communal divisions, whereas Iran's resistance against US-Israeli policies during the nuclear talks has contributed to the final resolution which concluded in the lifting of the embargo against Iran. Turkey faces ethnic terror problems for over 30 years. Twenty percent of Azerbaijan's territory is under occupation.

Each action creates a reaction. External forces pushed the West

Asian countries towards unity on the basis of independence, non-interference in internal affairs and mutual interest. This is the ongoing process. As mentioned above, the economic potential of West Asian Union is \$2 billion, which is an economic picture that gives hope for such a union.

The actual question is to prepare local and international public opinions for the advantages of the "unity of the region". This kind of regional unity, obviously does not target any specific power, it only seeks harmony in a section of the world, which has actually been pushed into chaos, anarchy and terror.

The battleground of the oppressed peoples against the world powers can become a region of cooperation, prosperity, peace and harmony in the future.

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