

## TURKEY INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION: PAST CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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**Abstract.** *This paper aims to analyze the impact that the EU accession process has already had on Turkey's foreign policy since the acceptance of that country's 'candidacy' for EU membership in 1999. It also endeavors to highlight the potential challenges ahead for eventual membership, while commenting on the problems that Turkey may face in its future negotiations with the EU, with particular emphasis on the areas in which Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP) may need 'further' adaptation.*

### INTRODUCTION

Turkey's relations with the European Economic Community (EEC) – now the European Union (EU) – date back to 1959 when Turkey applied for associate membership. On 3 October 2005, the accession negotiations finally began. Turkey was the second country to sign a European association agreement, normally seen as a prelude to membership, as long ago as 1963. Owing to various military coups, it could formally apply for membership only in 1987. The European Commission recommended against that application in 1989, but it remained on the table. Throughout the 1990's, even as they prepared to take in the eight ex-communist countries that joined in 2004, European leaders trod gingerly around Turkish hopes, though in 1996 an EU-Turkey customs union was formed. In 1997, the Luxembourg Summit pointedly left the country off its list of candidates. A partial reversal of this decision occurred at the Helsinki Summit in 1999, which went on to recognize Turkey's 'candidacy' for EU membership. In 2002, Europe refused

to take that to a further level and start the accession negotiations<sup>1</sup>.

This paper aims to analyze the impact that the EU accession process has already had on Turkey's foreign policy since the acceptance of that country's 'candidacy' for EU membership in 1999. It also endeavors to highlight the potential challenges ahead for eventual membership, while commenting on the problems that Turkey may face in its future negotiations with the EU, with particular emphasis on the areas in which Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP) may need 'further' adaptation. It is divided into three parts.

In the first part, I analyze the effects of candidacy for EU membership on Turkey's foreign policy between 1999 and 2005. I conclude that *democratization as taking place within the context of Turkey's Europeanization process* and not the *democratization process 'per se'* can explain some of the developments in Turkish foreign policy (TFP).

In the second part, I examine the potential for problems relating to Cyprus and the Aegean, together with other

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<sup>1</sup> The Impossibility of Saying 'No', *The Economist*, 16 September 2004. Available on: [www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=3195754](http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=3195754)

issues such as the so-called Armenian Genocide and the creation of an independent Kurdish state in today's Northern Iraq, to further complicate Turkey's negotiations with the EU. I also try to elaborate how –in my opinion- the Turkish government may approach these issues to minimize the prospects of friction with the EU (and perhaps also with the US). In the cases of Cyprus and the Aegean, different negotiation tactics may need to be employed. As far as the Armenian and Kurdish problems are concerned, it is recommended that in the short term Turkey increase its political leverage over Armenia and Northern Iraq by bringing both entities within Turkey's sphere of economic influence. In the long term, Turkey may find it useful to begin land reform and develop strategies to complete the Southeastern

Anatolia Project to improve the living standards of its Kurdish citizens. It may also find it useful to commence a scheme that envisages a gradual devolution of political power to local authorities throughout the country. Such measures may minimize the separatist tendencies amongst Turkey's Kurds.

In the remaining sections of Part 2, I comment on Turkey's chances of becoming a 'full' member of the EU and highlight the reasons why some leading EU members like France are not very likely to give their final approval to Turkey's full membership in the Union. I also explain why such countries are more likely to push Turkey towards a 'privileged partnership' status in the medium or long term. The third section contains some remarks for the future based on the uncertainties described in the previous sections.

## PART I: TRANSFORMING TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY SINCE 1999

Democratization reforms through 'purely internal' dynamics in Turkey have progressed very slowly. It was only recently, in the late 1990s, that democratization attempts increased in Turkey mainly due to Turkey's aspiration to become an EU member – which is an 'external' dynamics<sup>2</sup>. The so-called Copenhagen criterion laid down for countries intending to join the EU in the post-1993 period demands that applicants respect human rights, the rule of law and the free market during the accession process. Hence, the EU connection plays a very important role in Turkey's democratization.

To be able to comment on the democratization attempts carried out by Turkey and elaborate on their effects on Turkish foreign policy, one must consider two propositions. First of all, attention must be paid to analyzing whether the recorded changes are attributable to the *democratization process per se* or democratization *as taking place within the context of Turkey's Europeanization process*. The former proposition is based on the assumption that the policy changes are a 'natural result' of the democratization process in Turkey. On the other hand, the second proposition defends the view that the policy changes are – mostly – attributable

<sup>2</sup> Ahmet Sozen, "Democratization in Turkey: Copenhagen Criteria for EU Membership and Reflections on Turkish Foreign Policy," (Paper prepared for presentation at the 2002 Annual Conference of the International Studies Association in New Orleans, Louisiana, March 24-27), p.2.

to the 'political pressures coming from the EU'. My observation is that the second explanation is more appropriate.

In Turkey, the drive for westernization can be traced back to Ottoman reforms of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the post-War period, and especially from the early 1960's onward, eventual membership in the EU has been interpreted as a necessary counterpart of the drive toward westernization and modernization, which itself has been proclaimed as official state ideology<sup>3</sup>. Four consecutive economic crises between 1994 and 2001 had the effect of making the Turkish economy very fragile. The business community also increasingly saw the EU anchor as a means to consolidate the kind of economic environment conducive to their long-term interests. The implicit fear has been that the economic reform process itself could easily be reversed in the absence of EU membership prospects<sup>4</sup>.

The Treaty on the European Union (TEU) made the principles of democracy and human rights a fundamental part of the process of European integration. Before the end of the Cold War, the logic of security cooperation overwhelmed the logic of promoting democracy. So, when countries like Greece and Portugal joined the EU in the 1980's, a lower threshold was applied to them. In other words, priority was given to certain geo-strategic calculations, and concerns regarding the economy or respect for

human rights were given far less attention. Article F of the TEU emphasizes the importance of governmental systems founded on principles of democracy, respect for fundamental rights, the protection of human rights, and fundamental freedoms. More recently, the Treaty of Amsterdam (ToA) amending Article O of the TEU provided for similar conditions<sup>5</sup>. The political picture discussed so far has made Turkey more vulnerable and responsive to EU demands in the period following its membership application—especially since 1999.

Greece, a long-time enemy of Turkey, joined the European Economic Community in 1981. For nearly two decades following its accession, Greece appeared to be the main obstacle to its eastern neighbor's EU membership aspirations. However, the situation changed in the 1990's. In the second half of the 1990's, the two countries came to the brink of war on three different occasions and were only stopped by Clinton's skillful diplomacy. This prompted a change in the Greek stance regarding Turkish-EU relations. After the Helsinki Summit in December 1999, the Greeks lifted their veto on the recognition of Turkey's candidacy status. George Papandreu, the Foreign Minister between 1999 and 2004, appears to have reached the conclusion that only the incentive of eventual EU membership can make Turkey more liberal and hence less aggressive towards his country<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Ziya Onis, "Domestic Politics, International Norms and Challenges to the State: Turkey-EU Relations in the Post-Helsinki Era", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 4, No.1 (2003), p.17

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p.22

<sup>5</sup> Harun Arikan, "A Lost Opportunity? A Critique of the EU's Human Rights Policy Towards Turkey," *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol.7, No.1 (Spring 2002), pp.20-21

<sup>6</sup> Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, "The Changing Role of the EU Factor in Greek-Turkish Relations," (*London School of Political Science, Hellenic Observatory, 1st PhD Symposium on Modern Greece: "Current Social Science Research on Greece"*, London, 21st June 2003), p.3.

It is true that there have been significant changes in TFP after Turkey's candidacy for the EU was approved officially at the Helsinki Summit. Let us examine the four main areas of contemporary TFP where relations with the EU had an impact:

1. Cyprus issue
2. Relations with Greece
3. European Security and Defense Policy
4. Forming a bridge between the "West" and "Islam".

The EU has identified several areas in which Turkey needs to undertake policy reform in order to make its standards converge with those of the EU. Of these, the role of the military in Turkish politics is the most important for our purposes. The military intervention of 1980 was the third in the republican era following those of 1960 and 1971. The Turkish army most recently carried out the 'velvet intervention' of 1997 by issuing a warning to the Islamist-dominated government and creating a chain of events that eventually toppled it<sup>7</sup>. Besides, the military-biased composition of the National Security Council (NSC) –until recently- allowed it to be the most influential body of the state in the shaping of 'both' domestic and foreign policy. Thus the reforms introduced to trim the political power of the military can account for many of the changes that will be observed below.

Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the main democratizing agent has been the state

and the extent of the democratization process has been defined by the state, in a top-down manner, in accordance with the requirements of Kemalist ideology, named after Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey<sup>8</sup>. Since the Ottoman Empire had come to an end owing to ethnic and religious fragmentation within the empire, the first job of the republican elites had been to establish 'secularism' and 'homogenous nationalism' as the guiding principles of the new state<sup>9</sup>. The military has been the main pillar of these Kemalist elites. However, most often it acted in concert with a large group of nationalist, and unelected, senior bureaucrats whose acts have often constrained the freedom of elected politicians to maneuver significantly.

According to Tsakonas, the Turkish *civil-military elite* is divided into two main groups, the Conservative Kemalists and the Reformers<sup>10</sup>. The Conservatives adhere to a strict interpretation of Kemalism and reject any deviation from secularism and uniculturalism. They tend to interpret the country's national interest in narrow security terms; they have difficulty recognizing any need for reform that will express new societal demands. Although their primary aim is the westernization of the country, they do not trust the western countries at all, believing that they are in a conspiracy to bring about the disintegration of Turkey if the right circumstances arise. The Reformers, on the other hand,

<sup>7</sup> Ihsan Dagi, "Human Rights and Democratization: Turkish Politics in the European Context," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol.1, No.3 (September 2001), p.52

<sup>8</sup> Tarik Oguzlu, "The Impact of 'Democratization in the Context of the EU Accession Process' on Turkish Foreign Policy," *Mediterranean Policy*, Vol.9, No.1 (Spring 2004), p.98

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Panayotis J. Tsakonas, "Turkey's Post-Helsinki Turbulence: Implications for Greece and the Cyprus Issue," *Turkish Studies*, Vol.2, No.2 (Autumn 2001), p.12

recognize the limits of the Kemalist ideology and the need to give new content to some of its pillars. The Reformers are in favor of reducing the role of the military and changing both the Constitution and the current patriarchic and clientelistic party system<sup>11</sup>. The majority of the population, pressure groups, journalists and business associations like the TUSIAD and most members of Parliament share their views. The competition for influence between these wings can explain some of the zigzags noticeable in Turkish foreign relations in the last 10 years. The Conservative group has been reluctant to relinquish their 'sovereignty' over key areas of policy that would directly undermine their privileged positions or interests<sup>12</sup>.

The civic organizations were unable to become, as a 'force below', the prime agents for political reform. By the year 2000, hope for political reform had been largely displaced onto the EU or to President Sezer. In other words, Turkish civil society was no longer viewed as the prime agent for change; *if change were to come, it would be either 'from outside' or 'from above'*. Additionally, although there has been a consensus in Turkish society that things need to change, there has been no agreement as to how such change could take place<sup>13</sup>.

Potential EU membership creates both conditions and incentives, constituting a powerful engine of democratization and economic transformation in candidate countries in the process. We can say that the

Customs Union created between Turkey and the EU in 1996 on its own failed to provide an appropriate mix of conditions and incentives to induce a major transformation in Turkey's domestic politics and economy<sup>14</sup>. More initiatives from Europe towards Turkey were needed to accelerate the transformation. Up until the Helsinki Summit in 1999, Turkey normally pursued policy lines disapproved by the EU. Turkish military operations in Iraq, the threat of force against Greece and Cyprus in the case of deployment of Russian made S-300 missiles on the latter's soil as well as against Syria over the PKK's leader, are only some of examples observed between 1996-99. How can this be explained? I propose that there are two main reasons for this behavior:

In December 1997, the EU's Luxembourg Summit excluded Turkey from the next group of countries that began the accession process. The ambiguous EU attitude towards Turkey's accession to the club strengthened the hand of the traditional civil-military elites in convincing a great part of Turkish society that further democratization without strong EU promises of membership would eventually create serious threats to Turkish security. So long as the EU appeared undecided about Turkey's membership while demanding that it democratize, these traditionalists could find a legitimate excuse to interpret democratization consistent with the EU accession process as a threat-generating exercise<sup>15</sup>. The EU hesitations about

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Onis, p.11

<sup>13</sup> Tsakonas, pp.16-17

<sup>14</sup> Onis, p.9

<sup>15</sup> Oguzlu, pp.100-101

Turkish entry consequently prevented the EU from channeling strong support to the pro-democracy forces within the country<sup>16</sup>. The EU could not be a strong enough influence for democracy in the pre-1999 era.

It is undoubtedly the case that the decision taken at the Helsinki Summit has accelerated the momentum of political and economic reforms in the subsequent era. It changed the mood of the public as well as official circles. The end of the armed conflict in the Kurdish areas during the early part of 1999 also strengthened the hands of the reformists. The Conservatives' resistance gradually started eroding. This was paralleled by increasing courage on the part of government circles to propose measures in areas previously considered 'taboo'.

Still, the tri-partite coalition government that lasted between 1999 and 2002 and the political crises that crippled its working mechanism meant that many of the really innovative steps were to be reserved for the future. Important developments have occurred in Turkey-EU relations in the aftermath of the AKP's election victory in November 2002. Although the party had strong Islamic roots, it presented itself as a center-right conservative party with moderate leanings and a commitment to secularism.

For example, the military's representation in the NSC was diluted only after the Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by the former Islamist Recep Tayyip Erdogan came to power in the November 2002 elections with a landslide victory. One drawback of the

Helsinki decision was that it failed to disclose a timetable for the start of the accession negotiations. It also did not guarantee Turkey's eventual membership in the EU. This prompted various wings of the civil-military elite to continue asking 'what if the Europeans do not agree to Turkey's accession to the club even though Turkey has undertaken all the radical reforms on the way to a liberal-pluralist democracy, as part of the efforts to comply with the accession criteria?'

In the last 6 years, the struggle between the conservatives and the reformists has not been easy. As Tsakonas put it, Turkey entered a 'turbulent transition period' in the aftermath of the Helsinki decision in 1999<sup>17</sup>. During this period, there were occasions when elite and societal preferences became radicalized- typical of a nation that experiences 'problematic democratization'- and the traditionally conservative groups, such as the military, perceived military adventures as a useful way to regain their political power and prestige<sup>18</sup>. Such reactions were especially acute as regards the political situation in Cyprus.

### 1.1. Cyprus

It soon became clear that Turkey's eligibility for starting the accession talks after Helsinki depended on the resolution of two chronic and sensitive issues: its border conflict with Greece (Aegean Sea), and the Cyprus issue. Greece was an EU member and Cyprus was destined to join by 2003 or 2004. Adopting a good neighborhood policy towards current and prospective EU members appeared to be vital.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> p.21

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

Attempts to continue to maintain the *status quo* could lead Turkey headlong towards a crisis in which the EU bid could be the main casualty.

Cyprus is a nationalist issue *par excellence* for many segments of the Turkish civil-military elite since it touches upon deep nationalist sensitivities. Until recently, a strengthened nationalism on the one hand and Turkey's strategic importance for the West on the other have resulted in the rigid Turkish stance on Cyprus. Over the years, Cyprus has become the sole 'reason of pride' for the Turkish Kemalist elite (especially the military), which promoted a modernization project that was a failure in some respects<sup>19</sup>. Some argue that the occupation of Northern Cyprus in 1974 is in fact the most vivid proof of Turkey's role as a regional power and the testing ground indicating what, how, and how much Turkey can do for Turks living outside Turkey.

Whenever bilateral EU-Turkey relations turned sour, Turkey has not hesitated to stall inter-communal talks by encouraging the nationalist leader of North Cyprus (TRNC), Rauf Denktash, to sabotage them by withdrawing from the negotiating table. Turkey has also threatened the EU that it might annex the TRNC if the island were to join the EU before a resolution of the dispute<sup>20</sup>. These events coincided with times when the 'Euro-skeptic' conservatives exploited tensions with the EU to gain the upper hand in their struggle for power with the reformers.

Once it came to power the AKP, much more than any other political party of the previous era, demonstrated

a high degree of commitment to the goal of full EU membership. Hence, the party constituted a key component of Turkey's pro-EU coalition by the end of 2002. After a while it secured the full backing of the media, the leading pressure groups and business associations. This not only showed its readiness to accelerate the reform process that had already gained momentum during the course of that year, but also expressed its willingness to diverge from the official state line in resolving the Cyprus dispute, even before the UN Plan on Cyprus became public. The party was clearly willing to challenge the military-security establishment on the critical issue of Cyprus, something that political parties of the previous era, including the liberal Motherland Party (ANAP), were not able to do. The AKP clearly faced a number of challenges and certain factors explain why it found success in the EU accession field so crucial.

First of all, the Islamists and the Kurds have been two of the major victims of the various military interventions between 1960 and 1997. The last military intervention in 1997 was solely aimed at removing Necmettin Erbakan, the then leader of the Prosperity Party (RP) from power. At the time, Tayyip Erdogan – who belonged to the same party –, was the mayor of Istanbul and not long after the 'velvet coup' of 1997, he lost his position and was jailed on the grounds of 'inciting religious hatred among various factions of the Turkish public'. Promoting further democratization in Turkey and curbing the military's political power was essential to ensure

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* p.24

<sup>20</sup> Oguzlu, p.108

that at least some Islamist views could be expressed more easily in the society and that no more military interventions that could potentially remove Erdogan from power could take place. The EU was the only body that could provide the AKP with increased momentum for democratization in Turkey and enable it to outflank its military opponents.

Secondly, the AKP can rightly be considered an unnatural conservative-liberal-nationalist coalition. Thus, it could easily start disintegrating in the case of another major political or economic instability in Turkey. As stated before, the EU integration process appears to be the main antidote for an economic instability that could have major repercussions in the political field as well. Given these facts, Erdogan adopted a much more compromising attitude towards issues that could sour Turkish relations with the EU. The key outcome of the EU's Copenhagen summit held in December 2002 involved the offer of a firm date (December 2004) for opening up accession negotiations with Turkey, provided it could satisfy all aspects of EU conditionality by then. This new perspective further shifted the balance of power in Turkish politics and society in favor of the pro-EU coalition. The constitutional powers of the military were rapidly trimmed thereafter.

After the Copenhagen summit, Turkey dropped its threats to annex Cyprus. In February 2004, the Turkish government pressured the Turkish Cypriot side to accept the UN sponsored peace proposals that envisaged the withdrawal of Turkish troops and the unification of Cyprus. The referenda held on both sides of the island in April 2004 showed that 65% of Turkish Cypriots supported the plan.

Nevertheless, the rejection of the proposals by the Greek Cypriot community effectively killed the hopes for a solution in the near future. Despite this outcome, the Greek Cypriot administration managed to accede to the EU, being recognized as the sole representative of the whole of Cyprus. This anomaly can be attributed to various UN resolutions adopted in the late 1970's and 1980's, as well as parts of the Copenhagen Declaration issued in December 2002 that concerned the Cyprus conflict. Having said these, I will now begin considering the impact that the EU had on some other aspects of the TFP.

## 1.2. Relations with Greece

Following the capture of Abdullah Ocalan in February 1999 that brought to light the relations between Greece on the one hand and Ocalan and his separatist Kurdish guerilla organization (the PKK) on the other, Greece initiated a sort of "rapprochement" with Turkey. This was reciprocated by Turkey and followed by the agreement by the Turkish and Greek governments to sign various cooperation protocols ranging from cooperation on fighting terrorism to cooperation on environmental issues and tourism. The formal recognition of Turkey as a candidate country for EU membership during the Helsinki Summit when Greece did not use its traditional veto against Turkey fostered the "rapprochement" between Turkey and Greece.

However, the Greek veto was conditional on certain points which were included in the Presidency conclusion of the Helsinki Summit:

The European Council stresses the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the United



Nations Charter and urges candidate States to make every effort to resolve any outstanding border disputes and other related issues. Failing this they should within a reasonable time bring the dispute to the International Court of Justice. The European Council will review the situation relating to any outstanding disputes, in particular concerning the repercussions on the accession process and in order to promote their settlement through the International Court of Justice, at the latest by the end of 2004. Moreover, the European Council recalls that compliance with the political criteria laid down at the Copenhagen European Council is a prerequisite for the opening of accession negotiations and that compliance with all the Copenhagen criteria is the basis for accession to the Union (paragraph 4).

The European Council welcomes the launch of the talks aiming at a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem on 3 December in New York and expresses its strong support for the UN Secretary-General's efforts to bring the process to a successful conclusion (paragraph 9 (a))<sup>21</sup>.

Therefore, the EU overcame the Greek veto by paragraphs 4 and 9 (a) where according to paragraph 4, the Greek – Turkey disputes would be solved diplomatically and if that failed, be taken to the ICJ. The above paragraph targets the so-called 'Aegean Dispute' to which more attention will be given below. Despite the expiry of the 2004 deadline, Greece has so far abstained from taking any action in that

regard. Since the Helsinki Summit, the relations between the two countries and the discourse used by the governments have been very positive compared to the previous years where the two sides never hesitated to use threatening words toward each other. At present, outside diplomats describe the relations between Turkey and Greece as "confidence building measures" between two democratic states with a good potential for normalized relations.<sup>22</sup>

### 1.3. European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP)

The impact of democratization accompanying the EU accession process on the style, process, and outcome of Turkey's approach to the settlement of the ESDP dispute has been minimal, if not negative, in character<sup>23</sup>. The matter concerned the possibility of allowing the EU armed forces to make use of NATO's military capabilities in EU-led military operations. Traditional state elites have had a near monopoly on this issue. Due to the 'national issue' character of the ESDP dispute and concerns about the quality of Turkey-EU relations, the Turkish security elite approached the matter from a nationalistic and unilateral perspective by adopting a bullying style<sup>24</sup>.

There are arguably three reasons why the tone adopted has differed from the one adopted with respect to the disputes with Greece and Cyprus. To begin with, the ESDP disagreement mostly dominated the agenda in the late 1990's and early 2000's. Those

<sup>21</sup> Sozen, p. 31

<sup>22</sup> According to daily *Milliyet* (9 March 2002), a dialogue between the Turkish and Greek foreign ministries officers regarding the Aegean disputes started in Ankara on 12 March 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Oguzlu, p.110

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

were the times when –although Turkish-EU relations were developing fast- there was still a respectable level of suspicion among the Turkish elites and the public regarding the EU’s motives towards Turkey. In addition, in contrast to the cases of Cyprus and the Aegean, agreement concerning the ESDP did not appear to be amongst the ‘preconditions’ for admission to the EU. Finally, a settlement of the dispute on the basis of French/Greek proposals would have left the door open to the possibility of using an ‘independent European army’ against Turkey itself in Cyprus or the Aegean. There was no way that any Turkish politician would allow the EU to make use of NATO’s military capabilities in EU-led military operations in the absence of satisfactory guarantees that Turkey would have a role in the decision-making processes of such operations.

#### **1.4. Forming a bridge between the “West” and “Islam”.**

Beyond issues such as Turkey-Greece relations, the ESDP and Cyprus, Turkey is also preparing for a role to minimize the prospects of a ‘clash’ between the Christian and Muslim civilizations. Many political observers believe that in order to decrease the likelihood of terror attacks against Europe and to use Turkey as a ‘bridge’ between the East and the West, the Europeans felt somewhat

obliged to open their doors to the predominantly Moslem applicant. The former German Foreign Minister put it this way: ‘letting Turkey in would be like a D-Day in the war on terror. By the same token, a ‘No’ to Turkey would antagonize other Muslim countries, especially the Arab world, which would see it as a slap in the face delivered by the West against Islam’<sup>25</sup>.

There is no doubt that among the 57 Islamic countries of the Organization of Islamic Conference, none is more secular or modernized than Turkey<sup>26</sup>. The international community is in need of a dialogue and consensus between the “West” and the Islamic world especially after the 11 September attacks in the US. Prime Minister Erdogan made this proposal the cornerstone of his lobbying in order to get his country admitted to the EU. Whether the conditions are indeed ripe for Turkey to play such a role will be one of the many issues that will be discussed in the following part of this paper.

In the preceding sections, I tried to demonstrate how relations with the EU actually led to changes in some aspects of the TFP. Now, it is time to move on to the second major issue: the challenges lying ahead and the areas where the TFP may need further adaptation.

<sup>25</sup> In his article published on 24 September 2004, Ahmad Amrabi, a columnist for the Arabic *Al Beyan* Newspaper regarded EU’s delaying games against Turkey as evidence of former’s racist and biased attitude against Islam.

<sup>26</sup> Bassam Tibi. *Europe, Turkey and Islam in Flux. Changing Identities and the Quest for Euro-Islam*. Available on: [www.cianet.org.ezp1.harvard.edu/olj/tpq/vol3-1tib01.html](http://www.cianet.org.ezp1.harvard.edu/olj/tpq/vol3-1tib01.html)

## PART II: CHALLENGES LYING AHEAD.

There are various issues on which Turkey may be pressured to compromise later on. The Armenian question and the need for a political settlement in the disputes regarding Cyprus and the Aegean Sea have already been mentioned. In light of the negotiation framework approved on 3 October 2005, I would like to elaborate on these matters further. In addition, I would like to attract attention to one other potential issue that –although not cited in the negotiation framework or the 17 December decision– could cause crises during the EU-Turkey accession talks: the disintegration of Iraq.

### 2.1.1. Cyprus

Article 6 of the negotiation framework approved on 3 October 2005 begins with the following statement:

The advancement of the negotiations will be guided by Turkey's progress in preparing for accession, within a framework of economic and social convergence and with reference to the Commission's reports in paragraph 2. This progress will be measured in particular against the following requirements:

Amongst many other things, the aforementioned article incorporates the paragraph below:

Turkey's continued support for efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem within the UN framework and in line with the principles on which the Union is founded, including steps to contribute to a favourable climate for a comprehensive settlement, and progress in the normalisation of bilateral relations

between Turkey and all EU Member States, including the Republic of Cyprus<sup>27</sup>.

Given the fact that Greece and South Cyprus are both members of the EU, they are likely attempt to exploit this factor and thus threaten the accession process if Turkey fails to comply with certain Greek demands regarding the Cyprus dispute. This situation can allow them to have the upper hand during the future rounds of UN-sponsored peace talks and act intransigently.

Should a political settlement of the Cyprus problem prove impossible over the next few years, the "*normalization of bilateral relations between Turkey and all EU Member States, including the Republic of Cyprus*" requirement can gradually force Turkey to extend both *de facto* and *de jure* recognition that the Greek Cypriot administration in Southern Cyprus demands, because it claims to be the only legitimate authority for the whole island, having usurped the title of 'Republic of Cyprus' since the beginning of the civil war on the island in 1963.

Pressures to withdraw the Turkish troops that have been stationed in Northern Cyprus since 1974 may follow the demands for recognition. This, coupled with the recognition of the 'Republic of Cyprus' government, can effectively signify the neutralization of certain concessions that the previous Turkish governments managed to extract from Greece, the Greek Cypriot administration, and the United Nations (UN) in the past.

<sup>27</sup> Adapted from: [http://www.abhaber.com/haber\\_sayfasi.asp?id=7786](http://www.abhaber.com/haber_sayfasi.asp?id=7786)

During the peace talks that have been continuing for the past thirty eight years, the Greek side reluctantly accepted that such notions as federalism and 'bi-zonality' (which will give substantial autonomy to both the Greek and Turkish zones) would be the key principles to govern the permanent settlement of the conflict in Cyprus. The UN has also endorsed this view in various resolutions. However, as no permanent peace treaty has been signed to date, the results of these compromises are not yet legally enforceable against the Greek side.

The history of the civil war that lasted in Cyprus between 1963 and 1974 and public opinion polls may suggest that Turkish Cypriots and Turkish public opinion are highly unlikely to tolerate any dilution of the principles of bi-zonality and federalism that arguably formed the backbone of previous UN proposals. Mr Erdogan and his government may soon find themselves sandwiched between the EU/Greek/Greek Cypriot demands for the implicit restoration of the 1960 Constitutional order that envisaged a 'unitary system of government' for Cyprus and the reaction of the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot public opinions against such suggestions.

In the forthcoming months and years, US backing is crucial to pressure the Greek side against being intransigent at the UN sponsored peace talks. This objective must be achieved through improving the strategic dialogue between the U.S. and Turkey. Turkey may also evaluate the prospects of unilaterally implementing some provisions of the Annan Plan that was approved by 65% of Turkish Cypriots. Such measures may include the unilateral proclamation of the

'autonomous' Turkish Cypriot State envisaged in the Annan Plan. The proclamation of the Turkish Cypriot State may create a new legal situation in the island that may also enable the Turkish Cypriot side to bypass certain UN resolutions that expressly condemned and targeted the 'secessionist' Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983 and that have been the source of the isolationist measures applied by the international community in the fields of trade and sports since then. If the new political situation can somehow be recognized or acquiesced to by the US and some other Islamic countries, this could counter some of the bargaining power of the Greek side. Yet, the EU may not approve of such manoeuvres. It may also actively oppose them and try to block them.

### 2.1.2. The Aegean Dispute

"The Aegean Crisis" is a term coined by Greek governments roughly from the beginning of the Cyprus dispute in the 1970s up to the present day and referring to a series of, for the most part, unresolved, highly controversial and delicate diplomatic issues with the state of Turkey regarding matters such as

- The presence or absence of grey zones in the Aegean Sea.
- Sovereignty problems over many islands of the Aegean Sea.
- Airspace violations and unauthorized naval exercises.

The EU expects Turkey's unequivocal commitment to good neighbourly relations and its undertaking to resolve any outstanding border disputes with Greece in conformity with the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the United

Nations Charter, including, if necessary, jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice (Article 6, Negotiation Framework).

Unlike Greece, Turkey prefers a negotiated settlement achieved by dialogue. Turkey prefers a negotiated settlement because it is afraid that a decision by an outside legal party (such as the ICJ) would not fully appreciate Turkish interests. Another large factor is that legally the facts support more Greek claims than Turkish claims and do not take into consideration the special and political circumstances of the situation. Furthermore, Turkey is afraid an outside party may be biased against it and is sure that more favorable terms can be obtained through trade-offs and negotiations<sup>28</sup>.

Between 1912 and 1947 the Dodecaneses that were under Italian control had served as a sort of buffer zone between Greece and Turkey, and the Treaty of Paris upset the balance that this political situation brought about in the Aegean. These islands, with a large Greek population, were given to Greece in compensation for her suffering in World War II; Turkey, a neutral in the war, was in no position to obstruct the transfer even if it had wished to do so.

Several UN Conventions on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) were adopted in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and their provisions are generally regarded as representing the contemporary customary international law. Many Greek islands in the Aegean are just a few kilometers away from the Turkish coast. In view of this, full adherence to UNCLOS terms may not only convert

the Aegean into a *de facto* Greek lake, but may also distract –and sometimes block– Turkish commercial shipping between Istanbul and Antalya and also interfere with air traffic and oil exploration in the region. In some cases, Turkish commercial shipping in the Aegean may come to depend on Greek permission.

If Turkey one day becomes an EU member, many of the concerns highlighted above will be rendered meaningless. Still, this outcome is uncertain. So, to the extent possible, Turkey may need to continue to insist on a negotiated settlement. Before any dispute can be brought before the ICJ, Turkey may find it useful to seek some written guarantees to ensure that regardless of the outcome of the case, certain basic commercial interests would remain unaffected.

The Treaty of Lausanne and Treaty of Montreux, as well as the Treaty of Paris and several other smaller treaties, established not only the sovereignty but also the demilitarized status of many of the Greek islands. Since the 1960's, many of these islands which are so close to Turkey have been re-militarized in violation of these agreements. Greece denies that this situation forms a part of the overall dispute. If such matters as the continental shelf and territorial sea are taken to a supranational body (like the ICJ), Turkey can demand that it settle this issue as well. In this way, some of the security concerns that may arise from Greek wins in the continental shelf and territorial sea matters may be alleviated.

<sup>28</sup> Stephan Mann, *The Greek-Turkish Dispute in the Aegean Sea: Its Ramifications for the NATO and the Prospects for Resolution*, p. 56. (Thesis submitted to the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California in March 2001. Adapted from: [http://theses.nps.navy.mil/Thesis\\_01mar\\_Mann.pdf](http://theses.nps.navy.mil/Thesis_01mar_Mann.pdf))

### 2.1.3. The Armenian Question

The international recognition of the so-called Armenian Genocide may have huge political and economic repercussions for Turkey. As in the case of Germany, it may be asked to pay huge sums of compensation perhaps measurable in billions of US Dollars. Moreover, as Ross Vartian, the president of the Armenian Assembly of America has said, Turkey may also be pressured to return to Armenia some of its northeastern territories- areas that were populated by Armenians before 1915<sup>29</sup>.

It has been more than a year since the December 15 resolution was passed by the European Parliament. But, for whatever reason, very few people paid attention to its details. It contains some striking proposals that can impact on Turkey's negotiations with the EU. The parts of the resolution concerning the so-called Armenian Genocide recently attracted some commentary. The relevant part reads as follows<sup>30</sup>:

"...Take steps to achieve a breakthrough in Turkish-Armenian relations in view of the remarkable study by Turkish historian Halil Berktaç on the Armenian genocide..." (Paragraph GG);

It is well known that the resolutions of the European Parliament generally have the nature of recommendations. But according to columnist and Istanbul University professor Mithat Melen, the expression "The EU Council *notes* the resolution of the European Parliament of December 15, 2005" in paragraph 21 of the Final Declaration of the

December 17 Summit means that the recommendatory resolution of the European Parliament becomes part of the resolution of the EU Council and thus the document dated December 15, 2004 and the conditions contained therein become "*primary law*" for Turkey and "*preconditions*" for the accession process<sup>31</sup>. However, I do not think that the word "notes" can create such broad legal effects. That would require a more clearly defined expression.

The legal status of the 15 December 2004 resolution of the European Parliament asking for Turkish recognition of the Armenian Genocide is therefore uncertain. It is unknown whether the Armenian issue will be brought before Turkey *during* the negotiations. Yet, it is certain that the European Parliament must approve the admission of new members to the EU. Hence, it is possible that the recognition of the so-called genocide can be made a precondition *at the very end* of the accession talks. Given this, Turkey must start forming a strategy for the future. Increasing Turkish political leverage over Armenia by making that country economically dependent on Turkey may form the cornerstone of this strategy.

Armenia is a landlocked country that has suffered badly due to the embargoes applied by neighboring Turkey and Azerbaijan since the early 1990's. The embargoes were put in place as retaliation for the invasion of Karabakh, an Azeri territory. Because of its geographical position, to be able to have a significant level of trade or contact with the West Armenia needs

<sup>29</sup> Savas Suzal, Yenicag Newspaper, 17 March 2005

<sup>30</sup> Yalçın Dogan, Hürriyet, Dec. 25, 2004

<sup>31</sup> Dünya Newspaper, 25 December 2004.

Turkey's cooperation. It is much smaller than Turkey in size and population.

Turkey can lift the embargoes unilaterally and thereby make Armenia economically dependent on it. Some major Turkish companies may also make investments there. If Armenia becomes dependent on Turkey, then Turkey can use its economic and diplomatic leverage on that country to ward off future genocide resolutions and EU pressures in this respect. If the eastern neighbor continues to cause trouble, then the embargoes can be re-initiated. This can be done in addition to such activities as organizing international conferences on the 'genocide' issue whereby leading academics explain the Turkish views more clearly and more effectively by resorting to the Ottoman archives and other materials available in Turkey.

Such moves can potentially disappoint the Azeri public and government officials. However, this situation can arguably be remedied by increasing Turkish investment and trade in Azerbaijan. Moreover, military cooperation can reach the maximum level possible under the circumstances. The tone of military cooperation should be adjusted to take into account Turkey's relations with the US, Russia, the EU, and Iran. Azerbaijan is crucially important for Turkey and potentially a stepping-stone to increase its influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia in the future.

#### **2.1.4. The disintegration of Iraq and the creation of an independent Kurdistan**

Another problematic factor is the likely disintegration of Iraq over the next few years and the emergence of an

independent Kurdistan. Such an event is likely to strain Turkish relations with the EU, and more importantly the USA. Such a development could threaten Turkey's territorial integrity. Seen in that light, many Turkish generals may consider it a strategic necessity to use or threaten to use force against a future Kurdistan. However, given the strength of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe, such a move is likely to be followed by the *de jure* recognition of Kurdistan by most EU members, as well as a threat to stop accession talks with Turkey in the event of the use of force.

There is an issue that can prompt the US to devise strategies aimed at delaying the disintegration of Iraq in the short or medium term: the Iran factor. If an independent and radical Shi'a state emerges from Iraq alongside Kurdistan, it may come within Iran's sphere of influence. Moreover, the Shi'a Al-Hasa region of Saudi Arabia that harbors 75% of that country's oil reserves may also be destabilized. So, the most likely scenario is that the US will try to stop the disintegration of Iraq at least until 'Iran is dealt with'. Yet, it is also possible that events will get out of America's control and the disintegration will occur in spite of strategies to prevent it. In order to prevent a potential Kurdish state from tempting Turkey's Kurds and thus threatening Turkey's territorial integrity, it is crucial for Turkey to improve the living standards of its citizens living in East and Southeastern Anatolia.

It is absolutely logical to expect that the Turkish economy will prosper as a result of the EU accession process. However, the standards of living in the Eastern and Southeastern provinces resemble those in the poorest African states. The yearly income is only about

\$400-\$500 and the population totals about 20 million people. It will take many years before the standard of living can match that in western parts of Turkey now, let alone the rest of Europe.

The Kurdish bloc's ultimate aim is for Mosul and Kirkuk to be attached to the three provinces which are known by the international community as the Iraqi Kurdistan. An independent Kurdish state that controls the oil fields in Mosul and Kirkuk in Northern Iraq and is thus economically viable could attract the Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Syria like a magnet, threatening the territorial integrity –if not the existence–of these three countries. The cities of Mosul and Kirkuk control about 40% of Iraq's oil reserves. This figure translates to about 5% of the total world reserves. Over the long term, these cities could generate more than a trillion US dollars in income and foreign investment. At present, the Iraqi constitution envisages that the oil revenues will go to the central government. Still, this safeguard may be meaningless if tensions increase or if the country eventually disintegrates. In Northern Iraq, the population is only 3-4 million people. Thus, the Kurds in Northern Iraq can have a better chance of obtaining economic prosperity than their cousins in Turkey living further north.

Turkey may devise strategies attempting to prevent a chain of events that could jeopardize its relations with the EU, the US and threaten its territorial integrity. Together with countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, crucial US allies, Turkey may attempt to determine a common position and apply pressure on the US regarding certain developments on Iraq. Turkey may find

it useful to have a secret, 'very high level of dialogue with Iran' regarding the future of Iraq.

The Kurds are hopeful that Kirkuk may be made part of their region following a referendum that may take place in 2007. From the perspective of Turkey, the fall of these areas into Kurdish hands must be prevented. The Turcoman and the Sunni Arab tribes which form a substantial part of the population in these two cities may be armed for this purpose with weapons from countries outside the NATO. To prevent any diplomatic or military crisis with the US, Turkey may use some ultra-nationalist groups or underground organizations that are not officially linked to the Turkish army or the intelligence agency (MIT). Such a strategy was applied towards the Turkish Cypriots in the late 1950's and the Chechens in the 1990s<sup>32</sup>.

Just like Armenia, the Kurdish region in Northern Iraq is also a landlocked territory that needs Turkey's cooperation to be able to have a significant level of trade or contact with the West. If Syria and Iran somehow disintegrate in the future, the Kurdish territories in these countries (North-Eastern parts of Syria and Mahabad province in Iran) as well as Arab speaking Khuzestan in Iran and Alawite western Syria may secede. This may allow an independent Kurdish state to have access to the sea (either the Mediterranean Sea or the Persian Gulf), bypassing Turkey.

A disintegration scenario for Syria may materialize only if the current Ba'ath regime is toppled as a result of an internal rebellion or external force. The Sunni fundamentalists who arguably have the support of the majority of the local population may

<sup>32</sup> Adapted from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1223398.stm>



seek to come to power following many years of brutal oppression by the Allawite minority. A civil war may then follow. There is some evidence to suggest that fearful of the consequences of military action against Iran, the U.S. may seek the ethnic destabilization of the country in order to bring the regime down<sup>33</sup>. Recently, the Pentagon commissioned Hicks and Associates, a defense contractor, to conduct research into Iranian ethnic groups to examine the depth and nature of grievances against the Islamic government<sup>34</sup>. What consequences such strategies may have is not known. Unlike in Syria, the sense of a common national identity in Iran is stronger and the ethnic fault lines may be more difficult to exploit.

Unless a disintegration scenario for Iran, Syria or both materializes, the Kurds will remain desperate for Turkey's cooperation to be able to have a significant level of trade or contact with the West. In the short term, Turkey must make the Kurdish region more economically dependent on it. Some major Turkish companies may also make investments there. If Northern Iraq becomes dependent on Turkey, then Turkey can use its economic and diplomatic leverage in that area to influence the developments that might take place there.

#### **2.1.4.1. Can GAP, land reform and devolution solve the Kurdish problem in Turkey?**

Most important of all, more concrete economic measures ought to be taken to alleviate the poverty and misery amongst Turkey's Kurds. The

Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) that was designed in the 1970's to change the economic fate of the region may need to be completed as soon as possible. Also, the land reform program that has been shelved since the Nihat Erim administration in the early 1970's could be revived and land belonging to the treasury may be distributed to the villagers.

Finally, depending on the situation in its neighboring countries, Turkey may evaluate the prospects of undertaking some constitutional reforms and gradually devolving more and more power to local authorities throughout the country. The Kurdish regions may initially be divided into four or five administrative zones. Then some of these zones may be merged with neighboring regions that contain substantial Allawi and Sunni Turkish populations. In the long term, this may pave the way for a federation based on geography and not ethnicity. The US and Germany may serve as models in this respect. Such measures can serve as additional safeguards against Kurdish secessionism in eastern Turkey.

#### **2.2. The Europeans Consented to Negotiations but will they let Turkey in?**

So far, I have been discussing the potential challenges that Turkey may face while negotiating with the EU with respect to four major issues. However, the biggest challenge lying ahead is whether Turkey will ever be admitted to the EU, and if so, in what form. This issue is so important that it merits separate analysis.

<sup>33</sup> For some scenarios regarding the possible disintegration of Iran, see : [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/GD29Ak01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/GD29Ak01.html)

<sup>34</sup> Adapted from: <http://www.krsi.net/news/detail.asp?NewsID=1752>

The Europeans fought the Turks and tried to drive them away from Europe for about sixteen centuries. They almost achieved that goal with the 1912-13 Balkan Wars. However, circumstances brought Turkey to the gates of Brussels almost ninety years later, this time as a candidate for European Union (EU) membership. Turkey reached the most advanced stage in the process of accession with the EU's decision to start negotiations on October 3, 2005.

The success of the AKP Government in bringing this about should be noted. It reached a point no Turkish cabinet has reached before. However, it is obvious that Turkey still faces an ambiguous future, with special conditions imposed upon it, and possible compromises that might be demanded. Let us first analyze the content of the EU decision, and then discuss the possible reasons for the EU policy towards Turkey.

### 2.2.1. EU's 'Bon Pour L'Orient' Negotiation Process for Turkey

*BON POUR L'ORIENT* is a French term referring to the stamps affixed by the Western educational institutions on low-level diplomas which are not recognized in the West and which are valid only in Eastern countries<sup>35</sup>. This is the most suitable phrase that can describe the perspective presented to Turkey on December 17, 2004. The adopted document contains provisions stipulating that permanent restrictions can be placed on freedom of movement and imposes procedures that were never applied to any other EU candidates before Turkey. In this respect, it reflects a serious discrimination.

In addition, the end-result of the negotiation process became ambiguous before that process even started, with the possibility of Turkey receiving "special status" put on record implicitly in the form of the expression "anchoring in the EU without full accession." For the first time in the EU's history, this organization emphasized in writing that the ultimate nature of Turkey's integration within the EU structures will remain uncertain until the end of the negotiation process. It is more likely that Turkey may be directed via a "special route" towards "special membership," especially when Merkel and Sarkozy –famous for their explicitly anti Turkish stance- come to power by 2007.

Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats got the highest number of votes in elections held in Germany in September 2005, and Gerhard Schroeder has lost his seat. Even though Schroeder's SPD has guaranteed that it will be an equal partner in the coalition, given that the Chancellorship will remain with the CDU, Germany's stance towards Turkey during the negotiations may be toughened in the short or medium term. In the words of British ex-Prime Minister Harold Wilson, "[even] a week is a long time in politics." It is not possible to forecast exactly the results of the elections in France in 2007. However, the current situation is very clear: Jacques Chirac, who appears to be the other major (tacit) supporter of accession talks with Turkey, is likely to go.

As of 2005, many think that Sarkozy is the French Right's best hope for the next presidential election in 2007. Polls often credit him with being one of

<sup>35</sup> Ahmet V. Alp, H.O. Tercüman Newspaper, Dec. 18, 2004

France's most popular politicians. In the past he said on many occasions that Turkey should never be made a full-member of the EU. In his opinion, both culturally and geographically Turkey does not belong to Europe. Contrary to the common view, French political observer Julien Tolédano actually predicts that Nicolas Sarkozy may be defeated by the socialist candidate in a second round showdown in the next presidential election to be held in 2007<sup>36</sup>. Tolédano asserts that Sarkozy has no "economic programme at all" and that most far-right National Front voters will swing to the left because of their leader's defiance of the classical right since the mid-1980s.

The option of membership with "special status" for Turkey currently has no legal basis. But the EU Constitution provides options for establishing such a status. If adopted, the draft can support a "different status" within the EU, which is not fully defined yet. Most people believe this amendment was made with countries like Turkey in mind<sup>37</sup>. The rejection of the constitution text at the referenda that took place in France and the Netherlands in May and June 2005 respectively is a significant development that can delay its implementation for a few years. Still, the fact that the proposed document has been ratified in 13 countries (out of 25) means there is a prospect for its revival over the next few years.

In the meantime, the French government has passed a law that will ensure that Turkey's final accession treaty will be put before the French

people. What will France say – after the negotiations for Turkey's membership in the EU are completed along with other formalities, and all obstacles are removed? The negotiation date for Croatia's membership is the same per law to be enacted by the French Senate in March 2005, but its accession will not be subject to any referendum, unlike Turkey's membership. It seems inevitable that Austria, and even Belgium, will also follow the referendum procedure on Turkey's accession. It is very likely that 'fear of Islam' and even 'racism' will be on the rise in various E.U. countries over the next 10-15 years. Dutch Foreign Minister Bot stated that such referendums may significantly decrease the chance of Turkey gaining membership<sup>38</sup>.

In the past, the EU proposed to all other previous candidates specific dates around which they could expect to join the union. Major deviations from this type of proposal have not been experienced till now. The Turkish case is again an exception. Since no exact date has been given for Turkey's accession, it is also possible that Turkey's membership might be postponed to well after 2014 by using the accession of Ukraine or some Balkan countries as a pretext. According to the first paragraph of the December 17 Declaration, the accession of the candidates is conditional not only on their performance during the negotiations, but also on the 'capacity of the EU to absorb new members'<sup>39</sup>. If the Ukraine

<sup>36</sup> Adapted from: [www.politique-info.org](http://www.politique-info.org)

<sup>37</sup> Guneri Civaoglu, Milliyet Newspaper, 8 December 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Milliyet Newspaper, Dec. 20, 2004.

<sup>39</sup> The same condition has been repeated in the negotiation framework approved in late 2005.

and the Balkan countries become members of the EU, Turkey's membership might be delayed "for good." When the Turkish delegation in Brussels consented to those conditions, even the Swedish Prime Minister Persson expressed his outrage at the situation by saying, "If I were there, I would not accept it." The Turkish delegation were more concerned with certain short-term domestic or economic calculations than long-term certainty.

### **2.2.2. Problems of the Intergovernmental Conference Mechanism**

During the summit in Brussels, the proposals the EU Commission made in October 2004 were accepted and a decision was made to start the negotiations for Turkey's accession. According to Can Baydarol, the Chairman of the Turkey-EU Foundation, the acceptance of the kind of negotiation mechanism proposed in the October 6 Report issued by the EU Commission signifies the commencement of a negotiation process full of entrapments<sup>40</sup>. Negotiations with previous candidates were conducted addressing 31 topics, while that number was increased to 35 for Turkey and Croatia. Meeting the requirements of an intergovernmental conference, which requires a unanimous vote for opening and closing each negotiation chapter, would inevitably be seen in Turkey as a "70 concessions per member" process. Requests for commercial or political concessions that might transform the agenda of Turkey into a new minefield will always be on everybody's minds. Theoretically, a veto that can be exercised arbitrarily should

not exist. However, what will prevent the exercise of veto powers frequently and over very insignificant details?

The procedure for Turkey's accession to the EU should be the same as for other member states. Rather than having separate intergovernmental conferences for each file, an intergovernmental conference should be held only at the beginning of the negotiations; the remaining process should be conducted and finalized through the E.U. Commission, and the decision concerning full accession at the end of negotiations should be reached by votes of the individual members. The negotiations may appear to have been started, but they may lead Turkey to an unknown end and keep it in suspense for 10, 15 or 20 more years. Politicians such as Mesut Yilmaz<sup>41</sup> and journalists like Oktay Ekşi have pointed this out<sup>42</sup>.

Zafer Çağlayan, the Chairman of the Ankara Chamber of Commerce, points to another problematic and ambiguous issue in his speech on December 19, 2004: will the negotiation topics be discussed individually or in groups? Considering that discussing the issues of freedom of movement and agriculture may take up to 10 years each, the negotiation process for Turkey may not be completed by 2004, let alone 2014, if the topics are discussed individually. The negotiation framework published in October 2005 still leaves some questions in this respect. However, what it does make clear is that some of the most controversial chapters like the free movement of persons between

<sup>40</sup> Referans Newspaper, Nov. 15, 2004.

<sup>41</sup> See the interviews with HABERTÜRK TV on Oct. 10, 2004, Dec. 19, 2004

<sup>42</sup> Hürriyet Newspaper, Dec. 16, 2004

EU member states will be among the first to be brought up for discussion.

### **2.2.3. Understanding the extent to which the EU needs Turkey**

In order to assess the EU's sincerity about admitting Turkey as a full member of the EU, we have to understand the extent to which the EU needs Turkey. Many strategists in Turkey argue that the EU has opened the door to Turkey for the following reasons: (1) Turkey's large market; (2) its ability to prevent the conflict between the civilizations; (3) Turkey's capacity to make the E.U. 'another superpower'; (4) its young population; (5) using the Turkish model to promote democracy in the Middle East; (6) the Turkish army; and (7) the geo-strategic position of Turkey. My belief is that the last two reasons are the main one's for the EU's commencing of negotiations with Turkey. Full membership of Turkey in the EU is not essential for the Union's future and has the potential to upset political balances within the EU, so I am inclined to believe that Turkey will eventually be integrated as a country with inferior/special status within the European bodies. In the following section, I will try to elaborate on European motives for this outcome.

In my opinion, the geo-strategic position of Turkey is the main reason why the EU is trying to anchor Turkey to Europe somehow. Turkey, which used to be a forward post of NATO against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, has now become a protective belt for the West against the lawless states of the Middle East. Turkey is situated on the passage to the Caucasus' gas and oil, is in a position to affect the newly independent Turk republics, is the most effective

area to fight global drug trafficking, and has a key position in controlling immigration to Europe. As the U.S. has established hegemony over all Middle Eastern countries except Iran and Syria, and even neutralized Libya, it has become necessary for countries like France and Germany to gain influence over Turkey in order to maintain their presence in the Middle East. Besides, the Turkish Armed Forces is NATO's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest military power and has become even stronger after enduring the guerilla warfare of the PKK. If the EU without Turkey's full accession can utilize the Turkish Armed Forces, the EU may have more power to intervene in critical zones worldwide.

It is worth noting that if Europe wants to have the military capability to reach many/all corners of the globe and thus be accepted as a great/super power, it must have an army significantly bigger than the current level of 60,000 troops. At the moment, with the exception of some armies like the French, most European armies are either very small or can be classified as medium sized armies at best. Hence, they do not have enough soldiers to contribute to such a project. Turkish troops can certainly be useful in this respect.

None of the other possible reasons for the EU to accept Turkey as a 'full' member seem viable. The EU has already gained control of the Turkish market through the Customs Union. Full accession of Turkey would not make the E.U. another superpower but would instead undermine the political unity of the EU and end the "Federal United States of Europe" project that some key European elites may have in their minds. And I do not think that the EU needs Turkey for its "young population."

The EU can attract young immigrants from many countries including Turkey if it develops flexible migration policies like Australia, where a 'points based' immigration system allows government officials to select skilled workers. Like the US, Europe can attract workers from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, China, India and Latin America and other parts of the globe if the appropriate legal or social opportunities are created. What Europe arguably needs now is some improvement in current labor markets and a change in ordinary people's mentality. Before new workers may be welcomed on the continent, the current high level of unemployment in most countries must be brought down. Besides, ordinary Europeans must become more receptive to the idea of accepting immigrants from other places. The present situation is characterized by xenophobia more than anything else in most countries across the European continent.

Currently, the U.S. attracts at least half a million immigrants from Mexico each year, yet it has never considered it necessary to integrate Mexico into the Union<sup>43</sup>. In addition, Turkey already acquired the right to "freedom of movement" in 1985 under the 1963 Ankara Treaty and the "Annexed Protocol" of 1970, but unfortunately this right is not exercised at the moment<sup>44</sup>. If this right that has been unilaterally ignored by many countries is exercised in the future, this problem of the need for immigrant workers will be solved. I also think that the EU's problem of "low economic growth" can be dealt with through certain "structural reforms." For

instance, the social security systems of most European countries, which typically aim to sustain individuals "from the cradle to the grave" can be restructured and the economic burden can be reduced. Completing privatization can eliminate the principle of "etatism" which is still explicitly or implicitly in effect in many EU economies, and the production level can be increased by other serious reforms in E.U. wide employment laws to increase flexibility. The economic system of the U.S. can set an example for rest of the EU in several respects. To sum up, Turkey's full membership to the EU is not a requisite to save the economic future of the Union.

The extent to which Turkey's democracy can serve as a model for Arab/other Muslim countries is also questionable. Most Muslim countries have been under foreign domination for long periods in history and gained independence relatively recently. In this case, it might be very difficult for a lot of them to adopt Western-type democracy, to achieve such political maturity in the near future, even in the medium term. Most institutions or traditions necessary for democracy building such as civic societies and an educated middle class are absent in the Middle East<sup>45</sup>. It must not be forgotten that it took nearly 500 years for the European states to reach the level they are at now. It took the US 100 years, if not more. Modern communication systems, like the Internet and mass media might help close this 'maturity gap' more quickly. However, it might be

<sup>43</sup> Adapted from: <http://journalism.berkeley.edu/ngno/reports/newworld/immignumbers.html>

<sup>44</sup> Yavuz Donat, Sabah Newspaper, 12 May 2005.

<sup>45</sup> Bernard Lewis, "Why Turkey is the only Muslim Democracy," *The Middle East Quarterly*, March 1994 (Vol.1, No.1). Available on: <http://www.meforum.org/article/216>

unreasonable to expect it to close 'within the next few years'.

There is another obstacle to the democratization of the Middle East based on the Turkish model<sup>46</sup>. Nearly all borders of the Middle East are drawn in accordance with the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreements, which do not correspond to the ethnic and historical realities of the region. Many states can rightly be labeled 'artificial states' and national identity in many of them is not yet strong, Iran being an exception. With an imperial/state tradition dating back to the days of the Cyrus the Great of Persia, Iran has a relatively strong national identity and political maturity that increase its prospects for becoming a successful democracy in the region in the long run. Iran is the third country in the region (besides Turkey and Israel) to hold multi-party elections since the early 1980's and a large majority of the population openly/secretly admires basic western values. If these elections keep bringing anti-Western fundamentalists like Ahmedinejad to power, this is largely attributable to the policies of certain major Western powers that disappoint the population by applying embargoes to them and branding their country part of the so-called 'Axis of Evil'<sup>47</sup>.

Under many undemocratic regimes, territorial integrity has been achieved at the expense of human rights. If democracy 'spreads' to them too prematurely –and especially 'through external interference'-, there is the risk that they might be drawn into civil wars and the current political system in the

Middle East can collapse, just like a house of cards. I doubt that the elections held in Iraq in late January of 2005 will bring democracy to that country. Iraq consists of three large ethnic groups, namely the Shiites, the Kurds, and the Sunnites, which do not trust each other and have conflicting goals. What kind of a consensus will they reach? In the event of a U.S. withdrawal, will the situation in Iraq be like that of Afghanistan after the Soviet occupation rather than a democratic country? Overall, the prospects for successfully spreading western style democracy over the next few decades are not good.

Terror and the conflict between civilizations will continue to increase until the Palestine Question is solved and the U.S. changes its policies and stops bombing Muslim countries arbitrarily. If the U.S. attacks Iran in the short run, the division between the Sunnites and Shiites will become less sharp and this could potentially make the 'clash of civilizations scenario' more likely. To sum up, it is doubtful whether Turkey can serve as a bridge between the Christian and Islamic civilizations and the role it can play to alleviate concerns of a 'clash of civilizations' or spread democracy in the Middle East is minimal at best.

#### **2.2.4. Do the USA and Europe play games with each other?**

##### **2.2.4.1. "Full accession" of Turkey is unacceptable for France.**

Turkey's full-membership in the EU may tilt the current balance of power

<sup>46</sup> For further commentary on the issue see: Omer Taspinar, "An Uneven Fit? The "Turkish Model" and the Arab World," *The Brookings Project on US Policy Towards the Islamic World, Analysis Paper, Number 5*, The Saban Center for Middle East Policy (August 2003).

<sup>47</sup> For a constructive criticism of the US policy towards Iran see: Abbas Milani, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Future of Democracy in Iran*, The Washington Quarterly (Summer 2005), at pp. 41-56

within the transatlantic alliance towards America even more. This is another factor that may negatively affect its prospects for admission. It is beyond any doubt that the U.S. attaches high importance to Turkey's accession to the EU. We can understand American reasoning if we take a look at the book titled *The Grand Chess Board* by Brzezinski who was the U.S. National Security Advisor in the Carter administration and who continues to influence U.S. policies with his articles and studies. Brzezinski is in favor of accession of the Russian Federation and Turkey to the EU. He holds the view that through an enlarged EU the United States can expand its hegemony in Eurasia. In his opinion, the EU should be a beachhead for the U.S.<sup>48</sup>. In other words, the U.S. may need to keep the political unity of the EU weak, to make it "softer" by means of the accession of Turkey, and even Russia, and thus to continue to hold control over Europe.

The EU, under the leadership of Germany, may have the potential of becoming an important strategic rival for the United States. *Global Trend 2015*, the report drafted in 2000 by the NIC (National Intelligence Council) is just one of the studies disclosing that fact<sup>49</sup>. The European elite has a worldview animated by the belief that predominant powers should be counterbalanced and that a multi-polar world is more stable than a hegemonic or anarchical order<sup>50</sup>.

Some of the important documents approved by the EU members since 1992 can be said to contain evidence for motives to make the Union a global power.

Before its rejection by French and Dutch voters in the summer of 2005, the draft constitution for the EU envisaged such innovations as the creation of a "legal personality," and the appointment by the European Commission of a single minister for foreign affairs with a view to achieving the "progressive framing of a common Union defense policy". In "Saving NATO from Europe," Jeffrey L. Cimbalo also warned that some provisions of the draft constitution concerning 'common defense' had the potential for undermining the American role in Europe's defense<sup>51</sup>. Since the disappointing results of the French and Dutch referenda, doubts have been cast upon the potential for further deepening political integration in Europe. However, if the current political crisis in Europe can be overcome in the medium-term there is a possibility that the aspirations for making the EU a global power may be revived.

Today Turkey's population has reached 72 million, a figure larger than in any European state except Germany. According to the population estimates provided by the United Nations, within the next twenty years, Turkey will have the largest population in Europe – about 89 million people<sup>52</sup>. The

<sup>48</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Buyuk Satranc Tahtasi, Turk Dunyasi Demokrasiyi Gelistirme Vakfi Publications*, at p.64

<sup>49</sup> Available on: [www.cia.gov/cia/reports/globaltrends2015](http://www.cia.gov/cia/reports/globaltrends2015)

<sup>50</sup> David Shambaugh, *The New Strategic Triangle: US and European Reactions to China's Rise*, *The Washington Quarterly*, (Summer 2005), at p.8

<sup>51</sup> Jeffrey L. Cimbalo, *Saving NATO from Europe*, *Foreign Affairs* (November-December 2004), at p.111

<sup>52</sup> Katrin Bennhold, *Will Turkey join the EU club?*, *International Herald Tribune*, 13 September 2004.



populations of Germany, France, and the United Kingdom within the same period will reach, respectively, 82, 64 and 63 million. That means that Turkey would be represented by 96 members in the European Parliament. As far as the Council of Ministers is concerned, the proposed Constitution stipulates a system of dual majority: in order for a resolution to be adopted, it must be supported by 55% of the states having 65% of the population. In that case, Turkey becomes a major player in the decision-making mechanism with a population share of 15-20%<sup>53</sup>. Some studies argue that Turkey, holding a key vote, will be able to block 76% of the decisions of the Council “without the need for complicated alliances”<sup>54</sup>.

When Turkey draws the support of “anti-federalist” countries such as the United Kingdom and Denmark whose views on the EU perspective differ from those of France and Germany, it will be able to block any legislation and foreign policy initiatives that seek to deepen European integration. In the words of French ex-Minister of Justice Toubon, this “may cause the break of the Berlin-Paris axis which is the most effective axis in the decision-making mechanism of the EU, and its replacement with the London-Ankara axis” – this is exactly what the U.S. would like to see<sup>55</sup>. Both the United Kingdom and Turkey have strong ties to the U.S. Both attach primary importance to the concept of ‘national sovereignty’ and are likely to oppose the creation of a European

super-state at the expense of their national sovereignty.

Turkish-American relations have been strained since March 2003. Even if those relations come to a breaking point in the future, the accession of Turkey, which adopts a general approach similar to that of the United Kingdom, will dilute the political unity of the EU, and make it “softer”, and thus the United States will have achieved most of its goals. An E.U. with 30 or more members and a population of around 600 million is bound to remain politically impotent.

Some may think that this scenario of a London-Ankara axis emerging in the future is unrealistic. But an alternative scenario of a Berlin-Ankara axis may not be acceptable for a country like France either. According to *Newsweek* magazine published in late summer of 2004, Turkey, upon becoming a member of the EU, could form an alliance with Germany and the driving axis of the EU could be Ankara-Berlin axis<sup>56</sup>.

Turkey has had far more historical, political, economic, and cultural ties with Germany than France. The relationship has roots in the period of Kaiser Wilhelm II. During World War I Turkey sided with Germany; and during World War II Fevzi Çakmak, Chief of Staff, Numan Menemencioglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and many of their deputies supported Germany, though Turkey remained officially neutral<sup>57</sup>. The approximately 3 million Turks who migrated to Germany over the past 40

<sup>53</sup> Le Figaro, Nov. 24, 2004

<sup>54</sup> ABHABER, Dec. 14, 2004

<sup>55</sup> Adapted from: [http://www.abhaber.com/haber\\_sayfasi.asp?id=1976](http://www.abhaber.com/haber_sayfasi.asp?id=1976)

<sup>56</sup> 2 August 2004 edition.

<sup>57</sup> Saban Çalis, “Pan-Turkism and Europeanism: a note on Turkey’s ‘pro-German neutrality’ during the Second World War,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 16 No. 1 (March 1997), at p. 103.

years create another tie between the two countries. Germany is the largest trade partner of Turkey. In September 2002, Schroeder won the general elections only by 6,000 votes with the help of the Turkish population. These facts support the opinion that Turkey may prefer partnership with Germany rather than France.

At the end of World War II, France was humiliated and lost most of its power. Charles de Gaulle made France believe that it could become a global player again by uniting her power with Germany and using other European countries to its advantage. The EU system has generally been based on the control of “medium size” states such as Italy, the United Kingdom, and Spain by the German-French axis and on the absorption of other 20 some “smaller” states. Would the accession of Turkey not disrupt that equilibrium and cause France itself to be transformed into a “medium size” state within the EU? The memories of the Cold War and communist oppression are still fresh in the minds of many Eastern Europeans and they still feel very grateful to the US for ‘rescuing’ them from that situation. Over the next 10-15 years, such feelings will eventually fade away. Geographical, economic and historic factors may potentially cause Poland and other Eastern European countries to leave the US-UK orbit and eventually enter Germany’s sphere of influence<sup>58</sup>. Will this not be a sufficient blow to the French position within the EU framework?

#### **2.2.4.2. Would accession of Turkey to the EU be advantageous for Germany?**

Germany has tried to control the Middle East and reach the Indian Ocean since the time of Bismarck. Wilhelm II considered Turkey an important bridge on that route, which should be kept under control. Some Germans thought that the Ottoman Empire should be to Germany what India was to the British Empire. In the 1910’s, they invested in the famous Baghdad and Hejaz Railway projects with such views in mind<sup>59</sup>. Until recently, the German Government appeared to be an enthusiastic supporter of Turkey in its bid to join the EU. It is obvious that Germany would not be adversely affected by the full accession of Turkey as much as France would. However, some political calculations cast a shadow on good intentions. German Foreign Minister Fischer was taped by some TV crew saying to his Danish counterpart Per Stig Moeller “*Don’t worry, the Turks will never make it to the EU, we will lull them and then forget them*” at a cocktail party during the Copenhagen Summit<sup>60</sup>. The documentary “Fogh behind the Scene” was broadcast by Swedish DR1 TV channel, and became hot news<sup>61</sup>.

With the end of the Cold War, Turkey had the potential to influence areas with “from the Adriatic to the Great China Wall.” But, Turkey has been unable to go beyond Edirne and Kars because of political and economic crises in the last 10 years. A “strong”

<sup>58</sup> Janusz Bugajski and Ilona Teleki, *Washington’s New European Allies: Durable or Conditional Partners?*, The Washington Quarterly, Vol.28, No.2, (Spring 2005), at p.96

<sup>59</sup> Akif Emre, *Yenisafak Newspaper*, 8 April 2004.

<sup>60</sup> *Zaman Newspaper*, May 3, 2003

<sup>61</sup> Here, the word ‘Fogh’ refers to the middle name of Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the Danish Prime Minister, and should not be confused by ‘fog’.

and “wealthy” Turkey with full member status in the EU may influence the “Muslim Belt” in the Balkans (Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia). Turkey is currently the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest foreign investor in Bulgaria and Romania despite the existing economic conditions. Arçelik has established Eastern Europe’s largest durable consumer goods plant in Romania. Last year, The Koç Group almost bought Bulgarian Telecom that eventually was acquired by the U.S. Advent Group in a last minute deal. These two countries may gradually enter the zone of Turkey’s influence. Germany attributes great importance to the Balkans. This country was the sponsor of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. It considers the Balkans to be its “backyard” and a way to gain access to the warm seas<sup>62</sup>.

On the other hand, it is not easy for Germany to accept that Turkey would gradually acquire an influence equal to, or even greater than its own, in the EU. Germany, in order to protect its strong position in the world gold market attempted to foil gold production in Bergama by provoking the villagers through its secret services<sup>63</sup>. Germany’s attitude in the gold production case can suggest that in the context of the EU as well it may never allow a Muslim country to have more influence than itself.

In view of all these considerations, it is obvious that Turkey’s full integration into the EU and its complete exclusion from the EU are against the interests of the Union. It is more likely that the EU plans to keep Turkey in suspense and take advantage of such a situation as long as possible, and then exclude it through referendums or, if there still is

a need for Turkey, to integrate it into the EU as an “outsider” depending on the geo-strategic equilibrium of the time. There are some other motivations that the Europeans can derive from keeping Turkey in suspense. Some European politicians fear that if Turkey is not given the chance to begin accession talks, Iranian style fundamentalism may be on the rise in that country. Others also believe that an outright rejection might pave the way for Turkey to develop ever-closer ties with Russia.

If the EU ever allows Turkey in, it would probably be done in a manner that firmly integrates Turkey into the EU camp and avoids U.S. plans for using Turkey as a Trojan horse. German ex-Chancellors Helmut Kohl and Helmut Schmidt, who have been very influential figures in the last twenty years, have said that none of the EU leaders was sincere with Turkey; on the contrary they all had their own behind-the-scenes plans. The EU leaders who will not be holding office in 15-20 years take comfort in that, saying, “après moi, le deluge”. Will the “good cop” Germany pit the “bad cop” Austria against Turkey over the next few years? Will France use the Armenian and Cyprus questions as an excuse to sabotage the negotiations? During the Paris Conference that took place in 1856, soon after the Crimean War, the major European powers admitted the then Ottoman Empire into the Council of Europe, promised to consider it a ‘member of the family’ and furthermore undertook to guarantee its territorial integrity. None of these assurances were worth the paper they were written on and none were adhered to.

<sup>62</sup> Mustafa Balbay, *Cumhuriyet Newspaper*, 30 June 2004.

<sup>63</sup> Necip Hablemitoğlu, German Foundations and Bergama Case, *Toplumsal Dönüşüm Publications*, 2003.

### PART III: FINAL REMARKS:

Since the Helsinki Summit in 1999, one can see the influence of Turkish democratization reforms on TFP in such issues as Turkey-Greece relations, the ESDP and Cyprus negotiations. It is clear that Turkey is using peaceful political dialogue in solving its disputes with other democratic countries more often than before. However, it would not be correct to explain these developments by arguing that countries with strong democratic systems tend to employ more peaceful measures in trying to settle their disputes with other countries.

In the domestic sphere, many reforms were carried out by politicians on the pretext that they improved the daily lives of Turkish citizens and contributed to the westernization of the country. Erdogan, the current Prime Minister, was previously convicted for 'thought crimes' in expressing his Islamist opinions and he was anxious to avoid any repetition of that situation. However, it is doubtful that Turkey's democratization *per se* triggered a more compromising foreign policy attitude especially when dealing with other democratic countries. The problematic economy and the increasing desire to join the EU in order to introduce democratic reforms and to stabilize the economy made Turkey vulnerable to European demands and led to its more compromising attitude towards some issues. In other words, Turkish flexibility regarding Cyprus and other matters was as the result of 'political compulsion' more than anything else. Seen in this light, *democratization as taking place within the context of Turkey's Europeanization process* and not the *democratization process per se* can explain some of the developments in the TFP that we touched upon.

In the declaration issued by the Dutch Presidency last December, the

negotiation process for Turkey has –for the first time in EU history– been classified as an 'open ended process whose outcome cannot be guaranteed beforehand'. Hence the form of Turkish accession is still awaiting clarification. The so-called 'negotiating framework' agreed upon on 3 October 2005 has actually made matters worse in this respect by placing an even stronger emphasis on the 'absorption capacity' of the EU at the time when negotiations are finalized and Turkey fulfills all other obligations. It remains to be seen if the Europeans will ultimately try to exploit such uncertainties in their commitment in order to offer some form of 'privileged partnership' to Turkey instead of full-membership.

The future political developments that will take place within the EU structures are likely to have a big impact on the nature of Turkey's eventual integration with the Union. Attempts to deepen the political integration within the EU and to make the EU a global power suffered a big blow following the referenda that took place in France and the Netherlands in May/June 2005. The future direction of the Union cannot be predicted with certainty. Will European politicians be able to overcome their differences and revive the momentum for a deeper political integration? Will the EU become a two-tiered system where one group of states will pursue deeper political and military integration with each other while the rest refuse to follow their example? Will political fragmentation preclude the EU's evolution into anything more than a free-trade zone? So long as key political elites (especially those in France and Germany) continue their ambitions to make the EU evolve into a superpower, Turkey's prospects for full integration to the EU will not be high and integration

with a 'privileged partnership' status will continue to remain the most likely scenario. I consider any fundamental changes in the senior European politicians' ambitions in the short and medium term a distant possibility.

The December 17 decision to commence the accession talks is an important opportunity for Turkey. A negative decision on December 17 would have demoralized the people, destabilized the economy, and the AKP – an unnatural conservative-liberal-nationalist coalition – would have started disintegrating immediately like the late Özal's ANAP almost. As journalist Cengiz Candar put it, Copenhagen Criteria would be replaced by Mamak Criteria (meaning military) instead of Ankara Criteria<sup>64</sup>. Adopting 110,000 pages of EU *acquis* as its internal law would help Turkey turn into a modern country in every field even if it does not join the EU in the future. Turkey will need to come up with the tens of billions of Euros needed to adapt its industry and economy to the EU norms. The 9 billion euros likely to be offered by the E.U. until year 2013 may not be enough to enable Turkish governments to implement the environmental or structural reforms necessary to conform to the E.U. requirements during the accession talks. All of these issues are as important as accession to the EU itself. To ensure the continuation of the negotiation process in the most favorable manner for as long as possible, Turkey must continue its dialogue with, and seek even greater support of, countries like the United Kingdom.

This uncertainty regarding the final outcome of the accession talks may

affect Turkish willingness to compromise over contested disputes in the future involving the Cyprus, the Aegean Sea, Northern Iraq and claims based on the so-called Armenian Genocide. Also, this uncertainty, combined with painful economic reforms that may be demanded by the EU, might cause the Turkish public to turn away from the idea of EU membership. What impact, if any, changing Turkish public opinion can have on the attitudes of the ruling politicians or the Kemalists remains uncertain.

However, many may – perhaps correctly – assume that the start of negotiations means that Turkey will firmly remain within the EU's orbit and that the political and economic costs of attempting to leave this orbit due to disagreements will be very high. Suffering from an 11% unemployment rate, chronic debt, and a big trade deficit problem, Turkey needs foreign investment to solve its economic and social problems and seeking EU membership is the key. Since the December 2004 decision, more and more international banks have started rating Turkey as a place where investments can yield good returns<sup>65</sup>. All these vulnerabilities can subsequently weaken Turkey's bargaining powers and resistance to certain EU demands.

The December 17 decision will also arguably help the Turkish people feel "psychologically more secure" in the short term while the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia continue to go through a period of turbulence. What the future will bring remains to be seen.

<sup>64</sup> D.B. Tercüman Newspaper, Dec. 18, 2004.

<sup>65</sup> Between December 2004–October 2005, the national stock exchange index rose by about 50%, the US \$ exchange rate remained fairly stable and the government broke the previous years' records by making privatizations that yielded about US \$20 billion. On 6 October 2005, 3 days after the start of negotiations the Prince of Dubai announced his plans to invest US \$ 5 billion in Istanbul.