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PRIVATE **VIEW**



surfing on rough waters



Growth Thru

Universal Values

International Partnerships



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in rough waters

Our current issue comes out in the wake of the American presidential elections and in the middle of a global financial and economic crisis seen as the most serious since the Great Depression.

These are turbulent times that test the mettle of political leaderships everywhere. Turkey is no exception. It is all the more regrettable then that terrorism and political tensions continue to hijack Turkey's agenda.

When we published our last issue we thought that the turbulence in our politics was finally over after the election of the President. Alas crises continued unabated, diverting energies that would have been better used in revitalizing the reform process or in building consensus for the restructuring of our polity. The currently moribund EU accession process was perhaps the biggest casualty.

The lesson to draw from these crises is the need to consolidate the institutions of Turkish democracy and let the rule of law prevail. The imperative of our political agenda is to resist the temptations of populism and forge a new bond between democracy and secularism that puts equal weight on both. In some sense the trials and tribulations of the past eighteen months may have given us a chance to appreciate the value of such an endeavor.

In foreign policy though Turkey's moves yielded high returns. From the brokering of indirect Syrian-Israeli peace talks, to the historical opening to Armenia through the so-called "football diplomacy", to mediation efforts in a number of burning issues Turkish diplomacy proved its creativity and reliability.

IN a new era when American leadership will be redefined in both economic and political terms the relations between Ankara and Washington will acquire greater importance. We tried to provide the outlines of a new understanding to rebuild, consolidate and further improve Turkish-American relations and the modalities needed for success. We hope the authorities will take heed.

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Illustration by Emre Ulaş



Illustration by Emre Ulaş



Photo by Alexis Petridis

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Photo by Milliyet

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Cover Story “Surfing on rough waters”

İbrahim Kalın Turkey wants to pursue a multilateral foreign policy approach while attempting to become a regional player in the Middle East. In “Turkey and the Middle East: Ideology or Geo-Politics?” İbrahim Kalın discusses Turkey’s foreign policy regarding the Middle East with an emphasis on the force of regional developments and in terms of continuities and changes between the 1990s and the AKP period.



Photo by Milliyet

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Sedat Ergin Turkish-American relations faced one of their most serious crises when the Turkish Parliament voted down the government’s motion to deploy American troops in Turkey and open a northern front. Sedat Ergin gives a blow-by-blow account of the 1st of March vote in 2003 and shows what went wrong in “The perfect crisis revisited”.



Photo by Milliyet

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Mark R. Parris Steps must be taken to reconstruct Turkey-US relations that have deteriorated in numerous ways under the previous administration. In his “Memorandum to president-elect”, Mark Parris delineates six points that the prospective US administration should keep in mind and act upon in order to revitalize bilateral relations.



Photo by Milliyet

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Faruk Loğoğlu O. Faruk Loğoğlu addresses the president-elect in his open-letter entitled “Win Turkey as a Key Partner”, highlighting the most significant issues that will certainly dominate Turkish-American relations and offers his recommendations on how the US should act to further consolidate this strategic tie.



Photo by Milliyet

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Mehmet Ali Tuğtan The interests of Turkey and the US in the Black Sea and Transcaucasus can both overlap and diverge. In his article, “A Bridge Too Far”, Mehmet Ali Tuğtan examines how the regional bilateral cooperation evolved through the years, with an emphasis on political, economic, demographic, military and cultural dimensions of the region’s reality.



Photo by Milliyet

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Hugh Pope The longstanding problem of Cyprus has reached a revolutionary momentum. In “Rethinking Cyprus”, Hugh Pope lays out the chronological phases of the dispute and looks at the chances for a settlement between the parties and warns all concerned about the consequences of failure.



Photo by Milliyet

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Bülent Aras It might be an exaggeration to regard the “football” summit as a historical turning point, yet it still has a symbolic significance for the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia. In his “Beyond Football Diplomacy”, Bülent Aras argues that Turkey’s proactive foreign policy is essential for the creation of a new order in the Caucasus.



Photo by Milliyet

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Çağlar Keyder The financial globalization bubble has burst. Far-reaching changes in the policies of governments are expected. Çağlar Keyder analyzes the economic policies in Turkey over the years and argues that enhanced state capacity for the management of the economy is a must, raising pointed questions for the government in his “crisis calls; competence needed”.

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Yunus Muhsin Sözen The last two years of Turkish politics under AKP have been transformative. The shift from Kemalist tutelary democracy to AKP’s electoral authoritarianism and the power struggles between the two camps in Turkey is the subject of Yunus Muhsin Sözen’s nuanced analysis of the trials and tribulations of Turkish democracy in the AKP era.



THE WIND IN OUR SAILS

As TÜSIAD, we are happy to be back with the new Autumn Issue of Private View, entitled, “Surfing on Rough Waters”. This title draws attention to the current outlook of the world as well as Turkey’s agenda vis-à-vis the given political and economic environment. The prevalent economic crisis is changing the perceptions on the world economic order and engendering uncertainty. These are definitely challenging times for all countries in the world, including Turkey. Turkey has continued to occupy the headlines of foreign media outlets with its internal political issues, its active foreign policy endeavors and most importantly with its intricate relations with the EU. In Private View, we cover the essential topics of today’s Turkey, in their economic, political, social aspects.

We are going through historical times, when economic notions are extremely prone to unprecedented changes. The latest financial crisis has redefined the parameters of the economies throughout the world. Due to its already existing strong banking system, the banks in Turkey have not directly been affected by the epidemic that has hit the banks throughout the world. Yet, we will have to wait and see the repercussions of the crisis on the real economy. The US dollar and the Euro have both significantly appreciated against the Turkish Lira, which is a phenomenon that will undoubtedly change the forecasts for the economy, such as trade figures and the current account balance.

Turkey–EU relations are an indispensable part of our political agenda and they retain their significance during these volatile

times. At this juncture we call for the announcement of an official date for Turkish accession. This would be a firm commitment from the EU, and a much needed boost at this point to revitalize the reform process and public support for it.

In October 2008, the Confederation of European Business, BUSINESSEUROPE, of which TÜSIAD is a member, issued a statement supporting Turkey’s EU membership and asserting that the governments have a responsibility for future enlargements, especially in devising a coherent policy for the accession of the candidate countries. Regarding the Turkish accession negotiations, BUSINESSEUROPE affirms that both the EU and Turkey will benefit from more advanced economic integration and that Turkey should receive a fair treatment in the negotiations to avoid harmful ramifications.

The following points will be the Turkish government’s major challenges and thus priorities for the business community in the upcoming period: Enhancing democratic stability to better implement EU reforms, adopting the country’s economic governance to the requirements of post-September 2008 global shocks: credibility, confidence, rapid-reaction capacity and international communication ability, maintaining economic growth and job creation in a sustainable long-term trend, reducing the informal economy, promoting the ICT and innovation policies, boosting agricultural productivity and rural development and introducing a comprehensive reform of the educational system.

As a result of the financial crisis, we expect the economies

of the world to go through a recession. Generally, the new members of the EU and candidate countries have performed better and their growth rates were higher compared to the “Euro Group” countries. Thus, it is time we stop considering the enlargement as a negative thing and recognize that Turkey’s

one of the frequently debated issues, which hinders the efficiency of the Customs Union, by clashing with the concept of the ‘free movement of people’. We hope that a solution to this problem will be found in the near future. According to the EU acquis, it is impossible to create an alternative modality to develop

Turkey-EU relations retain their significance during these volatile times.

The announcement of an official date for Turkish accession would help revitalize the reform process and public support for it.

membership in the EU will constitute a positive input for EU’s long-term growth dynamics. As TÜSIAD, we aspire to make contributions to the ongoing discussions in Europe by preparing studies on EU’s existing problems, and on issues related to Turkey. We believe that the global role of the EU will be strengthened to a large extent in the future. The international context will continue to justify an enlarged European single market and effective political unity on the world scene.

Turkey’s economic and political landscape has altered a lot since last year. In our Autumn 2007 issue, we devoted a large section to the coverage of the 22 July general elections in Turkey, where the AKP had emerged as the winning party by a large margin. However, within one year, the closure case against the AKP due to its alleged actions against secularism, has tremendously altered the balance of power in Turkish politics. Despite the political turmoil over the closure case of the ruling AKP by the Constitutional Court, the Turkish political and economic system proved its stability.

The EU membership process should remain an important anchor for Turkey. A new pace is imperative in EU-Turkey relations. This would require a Turkey that concentrates more deeply on its EU related tasks. Technical harmonization and the rigorous implementation of reforms in all aspects of life go hand in hand. We hope that the new National Program will be a fruitful undertaking in this regard. However, the EU must also keep its promises to Turkey. Turkey’s status within the Customs Union without being an EU member already indicates a special status which can only be temporarily accepted before full membership. Any other alternatives, such as a vague and unworkable ‘Privileged Partnership’ is unrealistic given Turkey’s already existing pattern of relations with the EU. This attitude, in our view, is completely against the spirit and the values of European integration. It is against the very principle of the rule of law that this integration is based on.

The problem of visas for Turkish businessmen appears to be

Turkey’s current integration level other than full membership.

Turkey does not view the EU accession process as a sort of ‘entering in the club to take advantage of its spoils’. When Turkey enters the EU, it will be a ‘win-win game’ for both parties. We believe that Turkey has a lot to contribute to and a lot to gain from the EU. Turkey should expect the EU to proceed with the opening of all negotiation chapters once it meets the required benchmarks. We believe that the blockage by France of 5 negotiation chapters (“Agriculture”, “Economic and Monetary Policy”, “Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments”, “Financial and Budgetary Provisions and Fundamental Rights” and “Institutions”) on the grounds that they lead to full membership is completely unjust and runs counter to the spirit of further collaboration under the EU umbrella.

Recent developments that took place in the Caucasus demonstrate clearly that Turkey’s foreign relations need to be expanded in a multi-dimensional way as required by Turkey’s EU process. The strategic relations with the US, membership in NATO as well as Ankara’s neighbourly relations with Russia, Georgia and Armenia are vital for stability in today’s multilateral world. Turkey has engaged in an active foreign policy in the Caucasus, Middle East and is part of the prospective “Mediterranean Union” project. We hope that the Caucasus Cooperation initiative proposed by the Government will bear concrete results. The involvement of Armenia in the process and the presence of President Gül at the national football match in Yerevan to which he was invited by Armenian President Sargsian, are steps that will strengthen Turkey’s credentials regarding the Caucasus and energy politics.

In short, there is a lot to say and a lot to analyze. What we aim to do in this magazine is to provide insights on what is crucial now, and what can be critical in the future. We are pleased to return with our new issue, and we hope it will contribute to a better understanding of Turkey’s peculiarities.

From Challenge to Opportunity

These are extraordinary times for Turkey as well as the rest of the world. Its neighbors are in the eye of the storm, one is under occupation and the global financial crisis after having crushed the world's major economies is contaminating emerging markets in a furious pace. Turkey itself went down a bumpy road within the last two years. However, after a longish interval of bickering over legislative and presidential elections in 2007, the Constitutional Court's morally and logically challenging verdicts over the AKP closure case, Turkey is finally ready to embrace its prominent role in the new global order. Following the global financial storm and the elimination of the financial bubble, it is now time for Turkey, to consolidate its economy and democracy, and to demonstrate its commitment, quite wanting in recent times, to European Union membership.

As TÜSIAD, we have the responsibility to push the government in all platforms towards working for a strong economy and a sound democracy. Turkey has passed a major test on its democracy in 2008; the closure case against the governing AKP at the Constitutional Court. The public was relieved by the fact that with a qualified majority the Court's verdict was to not close down the party. Certainly, this result is an undeniable outcome of the reforms made in the course of the EU membership process. After the Constitutional Court's verdict not to ban the AKP, we wish to count on the government's oft repeated but alas unsubstantiated promise to keep the reform agenda on track.

We now hope that the European political leaders and the representatives of the European business world will get the message that the Turkish democracy has reached a certain maturity level. This should make a positive impact on Turkey's

EU membership process. Polls show that support for EU membership has gone up during the closure case indicating a large reserve of pre-EU sentiment in the general public. However, for us, the clearer message of the verdict was that the days of party closures are over.

Today, due to the global financial crisis, we are unable to make safe and sound assumptions regarding the future of our economy. Firstly, the US, and major European economies produced many radical economic packages to support their financial system. The main goals of these packages were to provide liquidity to markets, to preserve financial stability and support the capital markets. In the process, pillars of the world's financial establishment went to the dustbin of history, many banks were half nationalized and governments began to assume increasing responsibility in the finance industry. We are yet to see the implications of these measures in the markets, but observe that taking timely precautions has definitely helped alleviate the gloomy mood around the world. Undoubtedly this financial crisis that already brought about a recession in developed countries, will have a slowing impact on our economy. There are several question marks regarding the course, the full impact and the breadth of this slowdown. Nevertheless the important part is to be fully aware of this economic challenge and to take necessary measures to prevent any permanent damage on our economy. We appreciate the latest economic coordination efforts initiated by our government. TÜSIAD will continue to bear its share of responsibility in supporting the government's efforts.

In order to sustain Turkey's bid for EU membership, democracy, economic growth, social development and

legislative harmonization should be internalized by our citizens. We are happy to pronounce that Turkey has come a long way in terms of reforms in many spheres, with human rights and judiciary being two of them. Nevertheless, there is always room for further improvement to get closer to EU standards. As TÜSİAD; we urge the government in all platforms that are available to us, to show its determination in implementing economic and political reforms to further align with EU standards.

In this regard, we were pleased to see the publication of a comprehensive National Program with clearly identified goals and timetables. At this stage, the government aims to enact 132 legal amendments and 342 secondary

regulations, promises to take into account civil society's opinion as is the practice in western democracies. Proposing a thorough plan for the harmonization process will provide Turkish business an efficient balance between the longer term benefits and the short term costs of the harmonization process; especially in areas like the environment.

The EU Commission's 2008 Progress Report on Turkey that was made public in early November, overlaps with TÜSİAD's assessments to a great extent.

Looking from a general perspective, the report focuses on many issues with a fair and balanced approach. These include the insufficient political determination and weak position of the government on further democratic reforms, freedom of thought, combating corruption, women's rights, education and the legislation and implementation of *acquis* on economic and social issues.

These points should not be considered as the demands of the EU, but should be evaluated as the priorities in Turkey's own national development agenda. At TÜSİAD, we have kept these issues on the agenda for many years. In the future too, we will continue to pioneer Turkey's increasing global competitiveness, faster development and the EU membership goal.

On the European side, statements by prominent statesmen that question the legitimacy of Turkey's membership make us uneasy and shake our faith in EU's commitment to its contractual obligations. The fact that Germany and France, the central countries of the EU, continue to raise doubts about Turkey's eligibility for membership is disturbing to us. Naturally such an attitude and statements provoke a public reaction in Turkey. Yet we firmly believe that the EU's commitments *vis-à-vis*

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Turkey, or any other candidate country, is not dependent on shifting political moods in member states. Under current conditions of globalization, the understanding of "fortress Europe" would be economically, geopolitically and culturally self-defeating. It would turn Europe into a parochial, ethnocentric, and peripheral peninsula of Asia, the position it had before the rise of European hegemony in early modernity.

On the Turkish side, we are confident that the support and enthusiasm for EU membership that had been damaged by the EU's inability to keep its promises on the Cyprus issue and Turkey-skepticism of the French President Nicolas Sarkozy will rise again among the Turkish people. We

urge the Turkish government to commit itself to efficiently conducting the negotiations process and ask of the EU to make a fair evaluation of Turkey's reforms and politics.

Our focus is Turkey's democratic future in Europe and its economic growth and social progress. Turkey must find itself with a new democratic and economic agenda. We see at least four pillars to support a new era for Turkey beyond the current situation:

- A renewed Constitution meeting "fully" the EU's Copenhagen political criteria defending "democracy for all".
- Political parties adapting themselves to the requirements of a secular democratic country which has to focus on growth, jobs, educational reform, energy security, EU harmonization process and global competition policies.
- Continuation of Turkey's pro-European, constructive and result-oriented position on Cyprus. (Let's keep in mind the Turkish public's deep disappointment. Turkey supported the UN peace plan as it was asked by the EU. The EU's inability to keep its promises on Cyprus severely weakened the pro-European circles in Turkey).
- The adoption by the EU of a constructive and unambiguous policy and discourse *vis-à-vis* Turkey, abandoning any discouraging and destructive reference to "privileged partnership" or building a new wall of "Europe's frontiers" through the Aegean Sea.

To conclude, Turkish modernization is certainly keeping its pace. We know of course that finding our own synthesis in modernization needs substantial determination on our part. We, at TÜSİAD, will continue to do our utmost to contribute to this challenging task.



War at home, peace abroad!

İlter Turan

“Peace at home, peace abroad,” is the well known dictum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, who employed it to describe the political orientation of new Turkey. The expression was also meant to communicate awareness that domestic and external policies were intertwined, and one could not achieve peace in one domain without also achieving peace in the other. However reasonable this sounds, it has been belied by recent Turkish experience. While any observer examining only Turkey’s foreign policy might reasonably conclude that it ought to be characterized by a genuine interest in building peace in its neighborhood, those who study the country’s domestic politics would more likely describe it, if not as war, certainly as intense conflict. Such incongruence may not be unique to Turkey, but certainly Turkey seems to be an unusually powerful case.

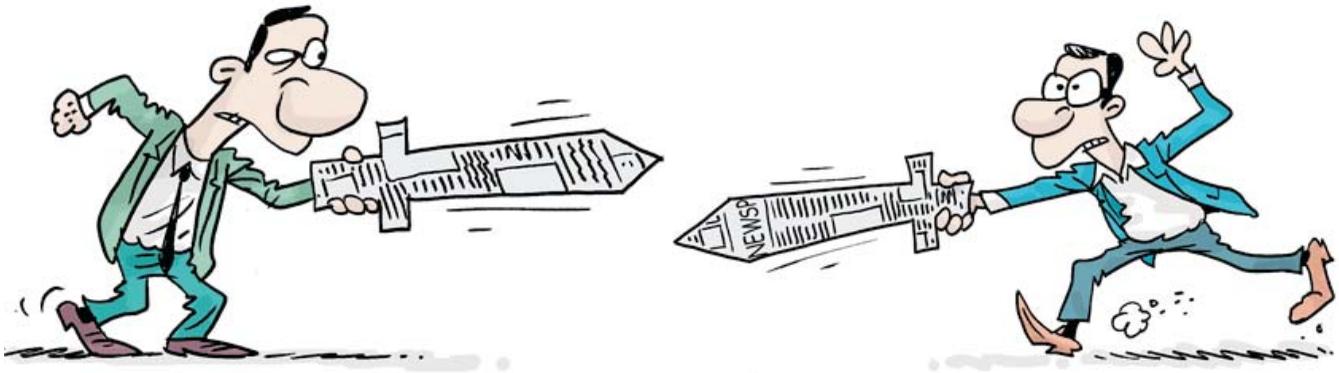
Changing the constitution: Salami tactics or pragmatism?

The difficulties Turkey encountered in electing a new president in 2007 culminating in a mid-summer election from which the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) emerged victorious and succeeded in electing Abdullah Gül president were all recounted in the last issue of *Private View* and need no retelling here. The election of a new president did not prove sufficient to bring an end to the crisis. The major opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP), while reluctantly accepting the outcome, displayed its dissatisfaction by not congratulating the president, by declining invitations to the presidential palace

on several occasions and generally staying distant from and minimizing contacts with the president. The fundamental objection derived from the fact that the president’s wife covered her head for religious reasons, which the CHP saw as the negation of the achievements of the Atatürk revolution of which liberating women symbolized by the removal of the veil was a major component. Furthermore, the CHP felt that the AKP had not really made its peace with the fundamental republican principle of laicism, that its secret agenda was gradually transforming the regime into a religious one and the placing of a man whose wife covered her head in the presidential palace was a major step in the implementation of this design.

The initial position of Prime Minister Erdoğan was a remarkable contrast. After winning the elections, he made conciliatory statements. He said that his government would further Turkish democracy, it would proceed to meet the EU conditionalities for moving rapidly towards accession to full membership. It would remove the headscarf ban for women at universities not by confrontation but by persuasion and consensus. He also said that Turkey needed a new constitution and his government would lead this effort. In fact, shortly afterwards, a group of scholars he had invited to work on such a project produced a constitutional text which temporarily stimulated intense debate.

It is unclear as to why Mr. Erdoğan chose to terminate his moderate orientation by deciding to bring about changes in a couple of articles of the constitution so as to make it possible



The Prime Minister has a tendency to utter not so well considered remarks on the spot when challenged and is too stubborn to retract them.

for females covering their heads to attend universities. A most likely explanation is that, when the Nationalist Action Party's (MHP) leader Mr. Bahçeli challenged him, suggesting that it would be possible to lift the ban if the prime minister were serious about it, he felt obliged to accept the challenge. The Prime Minister has a tendency to utter not so well considered remarks on the spot when challenged (he was in Spain attending a "Meeting of Civilizations" summit, an affair which he and Mr. Zapatero jointly chair, when he took Mr. Bahçeli's challenge) and is too stubborn to retract them. The stage was easily set for him to quickly renege on his earlier promises of moderation. Mr. Erdoğan proceeded to change two articles of the constitution by striking an agreement with the MHP. These articles were concerned with equality before the law (Article 10) and the right to education (Article 42). Changes were designed to insure that female students covering their heads would not be barred (physically) from entering universities and pursuing their studies. The opposition warned that the changes themselves were unconstitutional but to no avail. The new president quickly signed the changes into law. The government, in the meantime, alienated its partner the MHP by breaching its promise that a law would also be enacted to implement the changes in the constitution.

The CHP wasted no time in taking the changes to the Constitutional Court. It was indeed an intricate case, decided in the end, on a matter of nuance. The court was not empowered to rule on the constitutionality of constitutional changes, but

it could rule on whether proper procedures were adhered to in amending the constitution. There seemed to be no breach of procedures. But there was an unanswered question. The first three articles of the constitution describing the basic characteristics of the republic are unchangeable. They could not be amended either. The CHP argued that the government changed the unchangeable articles by introducing amendments in other articles. In the past, the court had upheld restrictive dress codes banning headscarves at universities by referring to article 2 that defines Turkey as a secular republic. Therefore, the opposition seemed to have a valid point. On the other hand, the constitution specified the conditions under which the court could rule constitutional changes void and amendments circumventing unchangeable provisions were not among them.

From the very beginning, the reality at universities was somewhat different than what the law depicted. In practice, some university administrations were more tolerant toward students wearing headscarves, mistakenly referred to as the "türban," while others pursued a policy of strict adherence to the "no türban" rule. The Council on Higher Education was on the side of strict enforcement until President Gül appointed a person supportive of non-enforcement when the term of the incumbent expired. The new head of the Council, Professor Özcan, asked university rectors to implement the constitutional changes immediately although the convention is to enact a law. For the provisions of the constitution are general statements of principle, not specific enough to enforce as is. Some rectors



took Mr. Özcan seriously while others ignored him. It was feared that incidents might erupt among students and between students and administrators. Fortunately, calm prevailed.

The Constitutional Court, noted for its creative interpretations of the constitution during the presidential election crisis, continued with its tradition of innovative thinking and declared the recent changes unconstitutional. The situation was back to the drawing board. Had this then been a case of “Much Ado About Nothing”? Not exactly. Frustrated, the prime minister announced that he would abide by the decision. In retrospect, it appears clear that he became more and more recalcitrant and intolerant of opposition. The headscarf issue continues to be unresolved although it has lost its prominent role in the agenda. The no holds barred struggle between government and major opposition, on other hand, has continued in other domains.

The adversary within

It is not just the CHP that is concerned with what it describes as the anti-secular activities of the government. From the very beginning of the republic, the judiciary was also handed the responsibility of protecting the republican state. Along with the military and the universities, the courts were expected to insure that the republic would be defended against challengers from within. The constitution and the laws posit that political parties must subscribe to the fundamental values of the republic or they shall be closed. It is the duty of the chief public prosecutor to start proceedings against parties that veer off course. In the past, such provisions were used to close down a variety of parties from communists and ethnically based parties to those that pursued goals and engaged in activities which the

Constitutional Court thought undermined the secular state.

So it was that one of the prosecutors from the office of the Chief Public Prosecutor prepared a lengthy document alleging that the AKP had become a center for anti-secular activities and initiated proceedings against the ruling party of Turkey. To the outsider, this may seem a bit bizarre but with the secular (*laïque*)-religious divide constituting one of the major cleavages in Turkish society, it seems not so unusual.

The case was built on a number of activities that members of the AKP had conducted, but the focus was clearly on the efforts of the party to get the headscarf ban repealed. Eighty-one members of the party were cited as having taken part in a concerted effort in rendering the party a bastion of anti-secular

activities. Forty-one out of eighty-one were members of parliament, including the prime minister and several ministers and Mr. Abdullah Gül who had since been elected president. As the Constitutional Court pondered over the case, everyone waited in suspense. There were apprehensions about what would transpire regarding both possible outcomes. If the court were to decide to close down the government party, not only would the country be thrown into a period of confusion which would also reflect in the health of the economy, but it would also suffer loss of international prestige including possible suspension of accession negotiations with the European Union, a point raised by Olli Rehn, the Commissioner for Enlargement as well as Manuel Barroso, the head of the Commission himself. If, on the other hand, the AKP got away with no penalty, the secularist camp feared that the last barrier to the government’s introducing more religion colored legislation would be removed.

The vote in the eleven-member court was split. Six of the judges felt that the party should be closed. This was a majority in a court of eleven but a qualified majority of seven was required in party closing cases. Four judges also thought that the party had become a center of anti-secular activities, but judged that the violations were not so severe as to warrant its closing. The party should be deprived of half of the public funding which is given on an annual basis to political parties meeting certain conditions in order to spare them from becoming too dependent on special interests. The chief justice was of the opinion that the party had not violated the law. While the verdict, depriving the party temporarily of public funding was politically expedient, it was confusing. Presumably, the government party had become a bastion of anti-secular activities,

a rather serious allegation, but it would continue to rule since its anti-secularism had not been vehement enough. On the other hand, what was there to keep the government from keeping the same course since it had only received a monetary penalty, a deprivation the party could easily meet by launching a campaign for contributions?

In retrospect, odd though it was, the decision of the Constitutional Court appears to have been the best possible decision. It may be useful, however, for Turkey to reconsider its rules about the closing of parties.

Such reconsideration is all the more imperative in view of the fact that the Constitutional Court is considering the closing of Democratic Society Party, (DTP), which is an ethnic Kurdish party, and the only one that represents openly ethnic politics in the parliament. While many Turks including those of Kurdish background do not approve of ethnically based politics, particularly a brand of it that has been unwilling to denounce ethnic terror conducted by the PKK, the DTP still constitutes the only political organization through which some of the less orthodox ethnic demands may be aired within the context of ordinary politics. It is interesting that the AKP so concerned about its own closing has expressed little interest in the fate of the DTP although its presence does in all likelihood contribute in containing ethnic terrorism and provides a channel where political extremism may be integrated into peaceful political discourse. It seems that the opposition is not concerned about the plight of the DTP any more than the government.

The man with a temper and his questionable buddies

The end of the court case was met with relief. Since its re-election, the AKP had been preoccupied with electing a president, going through the headscarf ordeal without success and finally an existential trial. It was now hoped that the government could turn to major policy matters. The government had not had time to pay enough attention to the economy, it had done very little to meet EU expectations related to progress on accession



Three events have recently sapped the energies of both the public and the government, all having to do with acts of corruption and involving close associates of the prime minister.

negotiations and a host of other concerns waited for the government's attention.

The Prime minister's initial reaction was again conciliatory. He reminded all that his government was everyone's government and would run its affairs that way. But, his quick temper, his proclivity to respond to every remark made about him or his government by anyone (often on the spot), his stubbornness that keeps him from withdrawing remarks not carefully uttered, his deep sense of loyalty to his political comrades to the extent of supporting them even when they are failing in their jobs or when they have been possibly involved in corruption cases, his inability to judge the implications of what he does in the broader framework of national and international politics and his preference for resorting to his authority and charisma to exact obedience rather than building consensus have come together to produce a highly problematical leadership style.

Three events have recently sapped the energies of both the public and the government, all having to do with acts of corruption and involving close associates of the prime minister. The first case concerned one of the vice presidents of the party who has allegedly intervened in favor of a private company to change zoning regulations such that the value of a particular piece of land had gone up many times overnight. Mr. Dişli, the party vice president, some documents indicated, might have received as much as a million dollars in kickbacks. After denials and accusations, the prime minister still did not ask for the resignation of his aide but Mr. Dişli felt compelled to resign when it became clear that few even among his colleagues believed his explanations and staying on would do damage to his party.

Even a more complex and serious corruption case of international proportions has erupted more recently. It concerns the activities of a charity named *Deniz Feneri* or, in English, the Lighthouse Society. Two parallel organizations bearing the same name, one in Germany and the other in Turkey, have been engaged in charity work. The organization in Germany has collected significant sums of money through a

network of mosques and religious organizations based on trust but no receipts, etc. A significant part of this money appears to have been transferred to Turkey, sometimes in suitcases to avoid tracking, to finance the opening and sustaining of a religiously oriented TV channel and a radio station. There are clear signs that some of the funds may have also been used for personal enrichment. A smaller portion appears to have been transferred to the local charity.

The scandal surrounding the two parallel Lighthouse charities might not have been an exciting find for the opposition if it were a pure case of swindling or were it not for the fact that some personalities implicated in the German case had been closely linked with the ruling party. In fact, a key figure that the German police was trying to apprehend, Mr. Zahid Akman, is currently the head of the Radio and Television Oversight Board (RTÜK), which insures that broadcasts are in conformity with statutory requirements. Some of the other figures implicated in the conspiracy are also well known figures in AKP circles.

Mr. Akman, has tried to deny the allegations about his involvement in the swindling operation, his inexplicable way of acquiring a surprising amount of wealth and his supplying inaccurate information relating to his appointment. The opposition and many independents have asked that he resign. He was still in office, however, at the time of this writing.

A third case has recently come up about Mr. Erdoğan's right hand man and another vice-president of the party, Mir Dengir Mehmet Firat. He was accused of being one of the owners of a company that was involved in receiving export subsidies when nothing had been exported and influence peddling in favor of the company to get it off a red list for having conducted some activities the legality of which were questionable. Mr. Firat has tried to meet the challenge by holding a public debate with the spokesman of the CHP that has masterminded the campaign against him. He has failed to explain some of his doings and the opposition is gathering more material to go on challenging him.

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criminal activity
related to
politics.

Heyday of the opposition

After spending time in ideological battles against the government, accusing it of anti-secular activities, the CHP has suddenly come up with a new strategy that seems to excite the party organization and inject life into it and at the same time capture the interest of the voters. There is no doubt that more stories will be coming up since neither the AKP nor the government appears short of actions that need further explanation.

The reaction of the prime minister to the exposure of possible corruption cases has only served to facilitate the work of the opposition and contributed to the impression that charges are serious and credible. As the charges began appearing in the press, Mr. Erdoğan, said that the Doğan Group of Companies which owns many of the most popular dailies in Turkey, were carrying a vendetta against him and his party because the government had turned down a zoning change that would have given Mr. Aydın Doğan millions of dollars. Such an allegation, true or false, did not constitute a satisfactory explanation for the misdeeds that had been reported in the press. It also appears that the public was not persuaded by Mr. Erdoğan.

Frustrated, the Prime Minister took his message to political rallies in small towns where he also asked his supporters to boycott the Doğan Group newspapers. Such recommendations presented a serious challenge for a group of liberal intellectuals and journalists who argued that the AKP was a party committed to democracy and did not harbor hidden intentions about turning the political system into a religious one. The intolerance of the prime minister for a free press, coupled with his insensitivity to serious charges of corruption led them to question the wisdom of supporting the ruling party. The insensitivity of the government to charges of corruption has also sparked debate within the party and in supportive circles where some prominent politicians and columnists have asked that the party take these charges more seriously and exhibit stronger willingness to clean up the ranks and not protect people simply because they belong to "us."

For the first time since it came to power in 2002, the AKP appears to be losing its sense of confidence. It is too early to judge what this means. The upcoming local elections in March 2009 may provide the first clue. At the moment, the reverse of von Clausewitz' famous dictum is most apt in describing Turkish politics: "politics is the continuation of war by other means."

Is it the other side of the coin or is the empire striking back?

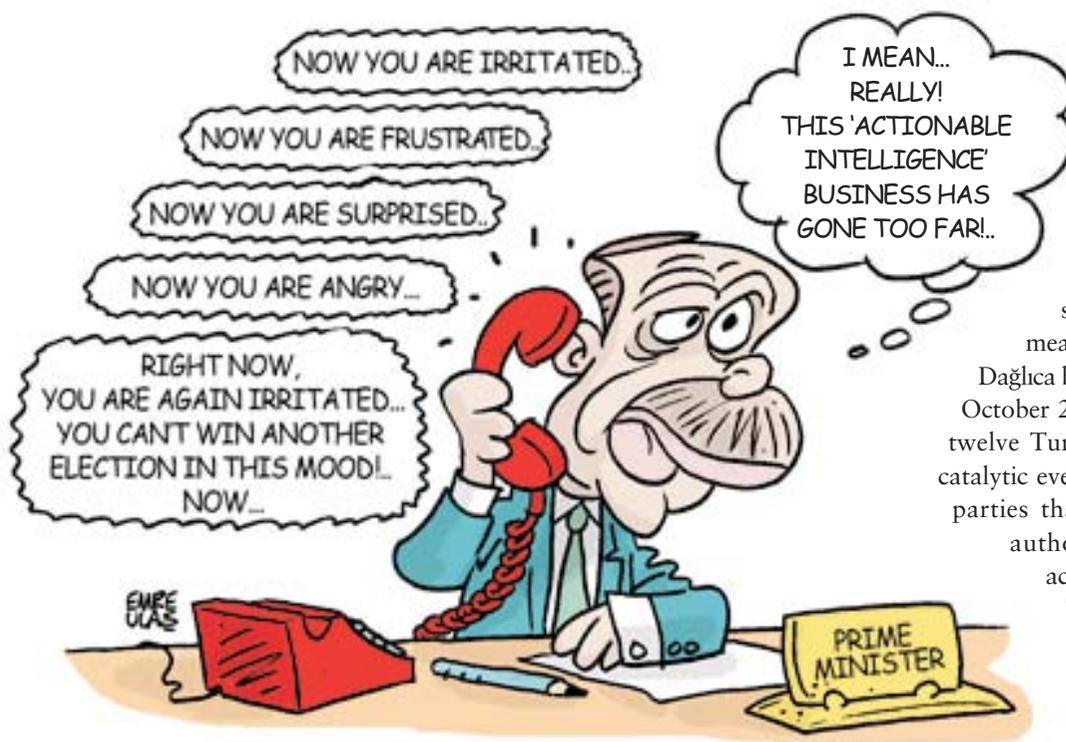
Each country appears to have some sort of a secret defense arrangement that brings civilians, bureaucrats, different segments of the security apparatus together to serve as underground resistance in the unlikely event of an enemy occupation or to discharge actions that formal agencies of the state cannot do. It also appears that part of this organization may sometimes get out of control and engage in activities for what it deems to be the benefit of the country and sometimes for its own benefit. For a long time, the existence of such an out-of-control framework was suspected within Turkey. An invisible hand seemed to protect individuals suspected of criminal activity related to politics. There were occasional incidents when some organized framework came close to being uncovered but with no results.

Then in January of this year, there began a shock wave of

arrests of the members of an organization named *Ergenekon*, referring to the mythical home of the Turks. The first group to be taken into custody included İhan Selçuk, the editor-in-chief of the militant laicist daily *Cumhuriyet*, Kemal Alemdaroğlu who had been behind the extremely strict policies of banning headscarves at Istanbul University campus when he served as its rector and Doğu Perinçek, the head of the Socialist Workers' Party, an ultra nationalist organization.

Raids, custodies and arrests have come in waves since the initial undertaking. A critical stage was reached however, with the arrest of two retired four-star generals. Both had been associated with the Society for Atatürkist Thought and had a major role in the pre-election demonstrations in defense of a secular republic. More recently some young officers in uniform have also been taken into custody along with other persons of military backgrounds and some have been arrested. The so-called Ergenekon process is still continuing. Some people have been under arrest for a long time although the formal court proceedings are yet to commence. While it may be understandable that the deciphering of a secret organization possessing the mastery of cover-ups and where many members do not know each other may be no easy feat, it is still uncomfortable to keep under arrest a mixed crowd of professors,





journalists, retired military officers, businessmen and others without submitting them to trial. Furthermore, the way the process has been handled does not inspire confidence. Segments of the prosecutor's case were periodically leaked out to the press, something that should not happen, exposing persons who may or may not be found guilty by the courts. Second, much of the information revealed, while having no bearing on the case, is of a nature that defames the individuals concerned. Third, there seems to be some correspondence between difficulties the government encounters on other fronts and the timing of a new wave of arrests.

A point of agreement

In contrast to most aspects of domestic politics where conflict characterizes the relationship among actors, there is one area where there is near national consensus: Ethnic Kurdish terrorism as manifested in the PKK that operates both in and out of Turkey and runs bases in northern Iraq has to be dealt with in military terms. The American invasion of Iraq had introduced a major constraint on the ability of the Turkish armed forces to deal with the PKK, however. Whereas it had been possible for Turkish forces to enter northern Iraq in pursuit of terrorists in the past, with the coming of the Americans, this liberty was lost. The only reliable American allies in Iraq, the Kurds were especially adamant that Turkish forces not come into their part of Iraq.

As incidents of domestic terror continued, the reluctance to allow Turkish forces to operate in northern Iraq had generated

considerable ill feeling against the United States in all segments of Turkish society. Americans had been arguing that the problem of terror was of domestic derivation and could be solved by the adoption of social, economic and political measures. A dramatic attack on Dağlica border post by the PKK in late October 2007 leading to the death of twelve Turkish soldiers served as the catalytic event, however, persuading all parties that the failure of the Iraqi authorities to stop the hostile activities of the PKK towards Turkey could no longer be ignored. The Turkish parliament quickly authorized the armed forces to conduct cross border operations. The

Americans realized that ignoring Turkey's pleas would cause irreparable damage to the bilateral relationship. The outcome was an agreement whereby the Americans promised to provide the Turkish military with actionable intelligence, i.e. information that could be the basis for immediate action and to yield to the idea that Turkish forces could enter Iraq for limited operations targeting the PKK.

Turkish forces, particularly the air force, have been conducting regular raids against the PKK bases on Kandil Mountain. Not inflicting damage on civilian populations in the area has been a major challenge but extreme care has kept the problem at minimum levels. Turkish attitudes toward the US have improved slightly and the government has continued its efforts to develop good relations with the new Iraqi government and the Kurdish authorities in the north.

Love thy neighbor

It is not too far back that Turkey had some sort of a problem with each of its neighbors. While some problems remain, the spirit with which Turks have begun to approach their problems with the neighbors have changed. Empathy, negotiations rather than hostility and saber rattling have been more characteristic of recent times. The AKP government continued the policy that was a major turnaround in Syrian-Turkish relations that moved from war to friendship under the motto "Zero problems with neighbors." Similarly, relations with Greece have moved from a point where armed conflict was not ruled out to one where this is not easily thinkable. In Cyprus preference is for

negotiated settlement and Turkey has refrained from actions that would render such a settlement more difficult. No problems with Bulgaria, increasingly comprehensive relations with Russia, cordiality with Iran, brotherly relations with Azerbaijan, warm relations with Georgia all describe good neighborly relations.

The exception was Armenia. The roots of the difficulties in this relationship are complex. The Armenian government has not been able to accept the way the regional map of the Caucasus was shaped after the First World War and still fails to acknowledge the finality of the Turkish border. It has occupied more than a fifth of Azerbaijan proper in its efforts to render Nagorno-Karabagh, inhabited to a sizable extent by Armenians, a part of its territory. Third, its interpretation of what happened to the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire is at considerable variance with Turkish accounts of the same events. Finally, complicating this relationship is the fact that Armenia is much dependent on the support of the Armenian diaspora communities elsewhere in the world for its own survival, and these communities see a hostile stance against Turkey as part of their identity.

Yet a number of factors have encouraged some kind of a rapprochement. First has been the economic deprivation that Armenia has been suffering as a result of its Turkish border being closed. A related second has been that Armenia has been excluded from the major transport systems of oil-gas and rail that have been developing in the region such as the BTC pipeline and the Kars-Baku railway. Third, the Russian invasion of Georgia and its occupation of the port of Poti and destruction of the rail system that supplies Armenia, has shown the fragility of Armenian logistics. Fourth, it is not clear that the Armenian citizens are supportive of hostile relations with Turkey. Yet, in view of the fact that Turkey has to take Azeri concerns into account in its relations with Armenia, a triggering event was needed to break the frozen relations. This came in the form of a football match for the European cup. The

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Armenian President Sargsian invited the Turkish president Gül to the game and he went. No concrete results have yet come about except imprecise indications that Turkey will help the Azeris and the Armenians reach a *modus vivendi*, something for which the Minsk Group of OSCE is also responsible.

The broker role Turkey has tried to play between Azerbaijan and Armenia is indicative of a role that Turkey has become interested in playing as a regional power. Ankara has offered to facilitate indirect negotiations with Syria and Israel, it has been interested in helping build domestic peace in Lebanon. Other actors have been involved in these efforts, whether Turkish efforts will prove to be more fruitful remains to be seen.

Clouds in the horizon

Turkey lives in a tough neighborhood. Its efforts to build a circle of peace around it are constantly challenged by developments with which the country has had very little to do. Iran's nuclear ambitions, for example, present a constant challenge because many of the sanctions, from embargoes to military action would generate demands that Turkey take part or offer its territory as a base of operations. But more recently, a more concrete challenge has come from the Russian incursion into Georgia. Heavily dependent on Russia for its natural gas and export markets, closely linked to Georgia in oil and gas pipelines, looking forward to a rail link to Central Asia through Georgia, working to help Georgia strengthen its security and economy, linked to Western Europe and the United States through NATO and pending membership in the EU, Turkey has come under a variety of challenges. It has so far weathered the storm because all others are interested in containing the conflict. But if some sort of polarization will take place, Turkey will have "No Easy Choice."

"War at home, peace abroad." Turkey has managed to sustain this so far. Can it do it for much longer? No one knows.

Ilter Turan is Professor of Political Science at Istanbul Bilgi University.

Time to Show Mettle

Murat Üçer

More than any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly.

Woody Allen

You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there.

Yogi Berra

One day the Hodja lost his ring. His neighbor saw him in the garden, looking for it. He asked him: "Hodja, what are you doing?" "I've lost my ring at home; I'm looking for it." "Why don't you look inside?" "Because it's too dark in there!"

Anonymous



emerging market open to global trade and finance, benefited greatly from this environment: exports boomed and a large and growing current account deficit-the balance of Turkey's trade and services with the rest of the world-was happily financed, as Turkish growth averaged over 6%.

But now the world has changed. It is certain that global liquidity, and more broadly, "financial globalization" - the idea of increased cross-border financial flows among countries - will be in retreat for some time to come. At the time of

I wish I could be more upbeat. But the amusing quotes above sum up pretty nicely the dire situation we are in, locally as well as abroad. Let me take these in turn, and try to explain why I think they are quite pertinent.

The world had it really good over the past several years. Global growth averaged near 5% and inflation remained contained, as finance - it now turns out excessively so - greased the wheels of international trade. Turkey, as an up and coming

this writing (mid-October), even in the best case scenario - that a financial meltdown will probably be avoided thanks to the very strong policy response of the advanced countries - it looked like the global economy was set for a sharp slowdown into the recession territory, and the financial sectors of advanced countries were on their way to further consolidation.

Basically we are all gearing up to pay a steep price for the extreme "leveraging" of the past several years. There is still a

and Leadership

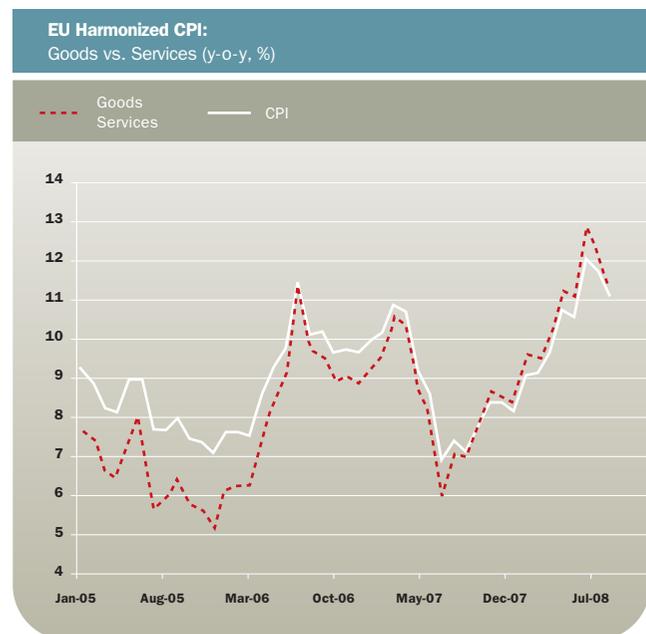
non-negligible risk of even a worse outcome, i.e. the unabated continuation of the dramatic events of recent months ultimately resulting in a Great Depression-esque environment with global growth shrinking and unemployment rates reaching unprecedented proportions. This could then lead to heightened protectionism and disruption of globalization for several decades to come, just as it happened once before, when the first great wave of globalization (that lasted from the late 19th century to early 20th) abruptly ended.

From Turkey's perspective, developments have been less dramatic. In fact, Turkey has weathered the storm relatively well so far, without any sign of "sudden stops", "current account reversals" and growth collapses of the old style. In fact, extremely difficult global conditions notwithstanding, we think it is more likely than not that a 2001-style financial crisis can be avoided this time around. The bad news is that, unless we understand the new environment well, adjust our policy priorities, and take bold action, economic stagnation and loss of policy discipline seem unavoidable down the road. In an article written for this journal some one-and-a-half years ago, I argued that after a successful run, Turkey's "macro story" had begun to show signs of faltering. In a nutshell, faced by two biting trade-offs, I argued, the government-and the policy makers around them-had begun to lose direction in economic policies. As Yogi Berra, the legendary American baseball coach advises in the above quote, we had to be extra careful because it did not look like we knew where we were going - and therefore there was a very good chance we would not be able to get there! And now, we have an additional problem: the global environment has changed in a way that makes procrastination and looking lost a whole lot more costly.

The first of these trade-offs was between growth and disinflation. Turkey wanted to grow fast, say at least 5%, but also continue the disinflation to single digits. With inflation showing signs of stickiness, this would not be possible without relying too much on the exchange rate, and without the global inflation environment staying benign. Put differently, given its reluctance to slow growth-which would drive service inflation down to levels compatible with single digit inflation rates - the Central Bank had to hope for what economists call tradable disinflation - and therefore luck. It is no wonder then that in the shock-prone world of recent years, with commodity prices

on the rise and occasional jumps in the Turkish lira, we've failed to break lastingly through high single digit levels. This is no good because unless we get down to low single digits and stay there for a good period of time, inflation expectations cannot be anchored, the inflation process becomes unstable, and long term real interest rates continue to remain high.

The second trade-off, which we also did not look prepared to accept, concerned how to square the cost of structural reform with fiscal prudence. No one in her right state of mind denies that Turkey has delivered an impressive fiscal adjustment since the 2001 crisis, and this has been very good for the economy. But this adjustment came against the backdrop of a booming economy when it was relatively easy to curb expenditures, collect taxes, and generate non-tax revenue through asset sales. In other words, this was a relatively easy adjustment, because it was of an "expansionary fiscal contraction" kind. But having faced slowing growth and much pressure from the business community in the run up to the July 2007 general elections (because of high energy and labor costs, as well as high tax burdens in the formal sector), the government stepped up budgetary outlays, lowered



taxes (including reductions in social security premiums and value added taxes for several items) and started flirting with the idea of providing broader incentives to businesses. In summary, having wasted precious time without much progress on deeper reforms - of the labor market, energy sector, expenditure side of the budget, tax administration, education system, and so on - fiscal policy has become hostage to, as well as a tool for, quick structural reform fixes. Grand-and conspicuously legitimate -

reducing the chance of the true reforms ever being implemented.

Essentially, we need to recognize that there is no easy way out of these trade-offs. The government would have to use true skill and leadership, formulate intelligent and well-prioritized plans, explain the stakes involved to the public in not making the right choices, and build consensus around them, which, admittedly, is a very tall order. Unfortunately, it does not look like there is such a plan, nor a willingness to accept that our

The program must be very clear in its priorities and the paradigm that it subscribes to. Lack of prioritization and intellectual clarity hurts credibility, making the whole program look no different than a hastily assembled shopping list.

investment programs, presaging as regional development initiatives, have started to add, and will probably continue to add, an extra burden on the budget.

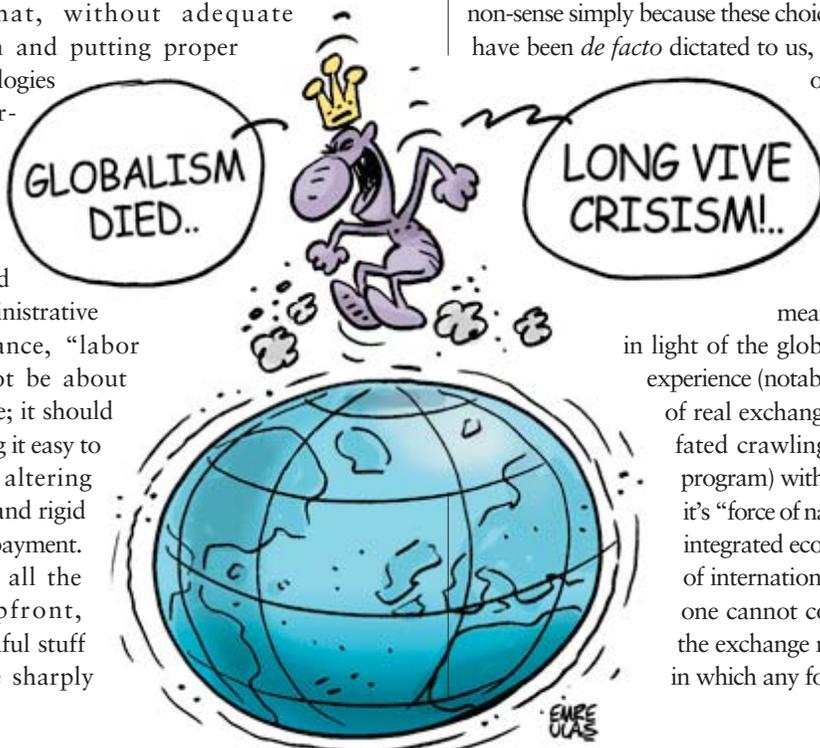
All this is quite problematic however, simply because instead of *ad hoc* and fiscally-costly initiatives, Turkey needs a coherent plan that focuses on the big picture, and targets at leveling the playing field for everyone. Otherwise, heightened discretion and further loss of fiscal discipline look inevitable. Calls for looser fiscal policy nowadays by some seasoned observers of the Turkish economy should also be seen in this light. This author believes very strongly that, without adequate institutionalization and putting proper commitment technologies in place, counter-cyclical fiscal policy may be a very imprudent path to follow. What Turkey needs instead is to accelerate administrative reforms. For instance, "labor reform" should not be about reducing taxes alone; it should also be about making it easy to hire and fire, by altering Turkey's expensive and rigid regime of severance payment. This is like giving all the "sweeteners" upfront, postponing the painful stuff for later, therefore sharply

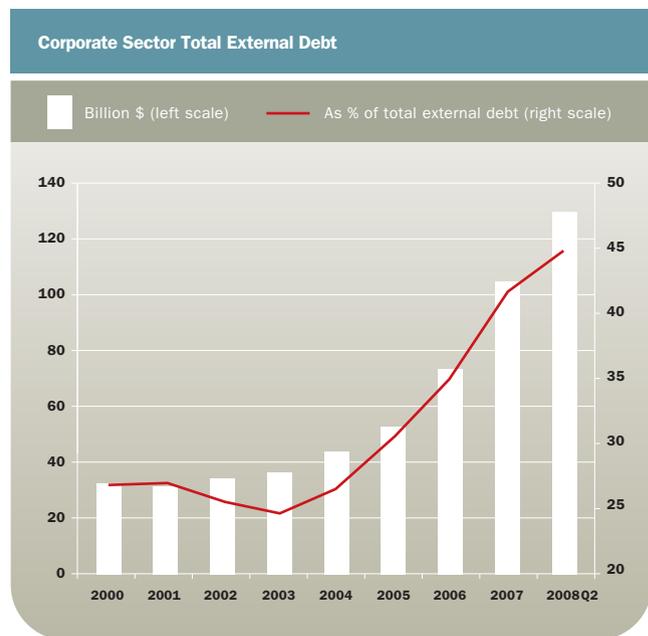
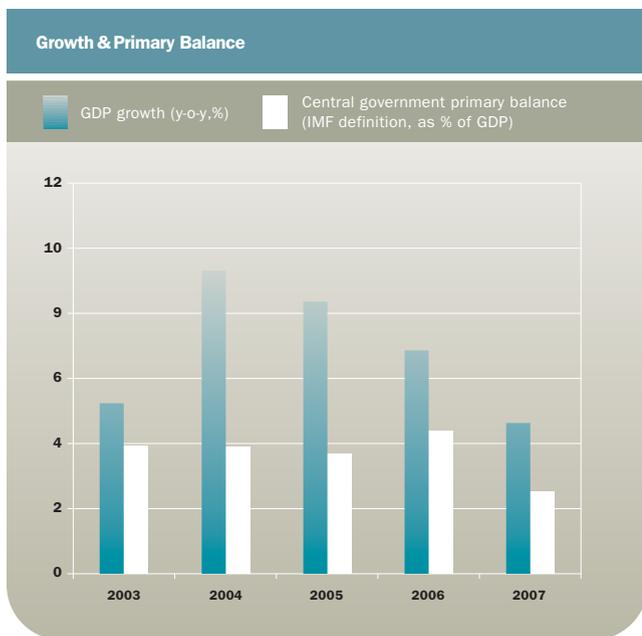
journey going forward will be a lot more painful and difficult. But more importantly, we do not even seem to be debating the right stuff. And that brings me to the third quote above or a folk story rather, from Turkey's own Nasreddin Hodja.

A reviewer of the economic and financial press in Turkey would quickly observe that papers are awash with news and commentary harshly critical of the Central Bank's monetary and exchange rate policy mix. The generic line of criticism is that the Bank is deliberately implementing a policy mix that results in a strong lira/high real interest rate nexus. This author thinks this is utter non-sense simply because these choices, instead of being our own, have been *de facto* dictated to us, either by history or by force

of nature. It's history, because no option other than anchoring the monetary policy framework around an explicit and credible inflation target - and letting the lira (broadly) float in the meantime - is feasible for Turkey

in light of the global as well as Turkey's own experience (notably high inflation in the period of real exchange rate targeting, and the ill-fated crawling peg under the 1999 IMF program) with monetary frameworks. And it's "force of nature" because in a financially-integrated economy, a well-known dictum of international economics postulates that one cannot control both the interest and the exchange rate. Since we live in a world in which any form of exchange rate pegging





is discredited, controlling the short-term policy rate becomes the only option.

Interestingly, the same papers and commentary pay only lip service to structural reform issues. Almost all emphasize the need to press ahead with structural reforms, but often without providing any details as to what is meant by them, which ones should have the priority, or how they should be coherently weaved in together. Why is the state of structural reform debate in the country so shallow? Well, that's possibly because "it's too dark in there!" That is, understanding, prioritizing, and implementing structural reforms are intellectually a lot more demanding than the DIY (Do-It-Yourself) economics of monetary and exchange rate policies. And, of course, one cannot find scapegoats as easily when it comes to structural reforms.

What, then, should be done? The short answer is a generic one. We need a detailed and actionable reform program, run and marketed by a powerful minister, or the Prime Minister himself. The program must be very clear in its priorities and the paradigm that it subscribes to. Lack of prioritization and intellectual clarity hurts credibility, making the whole program look no different than a hastily assembled shopping list. The good news is that we have some work done already on Turkey's reform priorities and how one could go about them, mostly by external agencies, such as the World Bank, OECD, and the IMF. True, the so-called Washington Consensus paradigm, which still is the main intellectual framework within which these organizations operate, has lost some popularity in recent years. But we should not forget that "one economics, many recipes" type new alternatives, though intellectually rich and appealing, could also end up in disaster in practice, simply because with heightened policy discretion, the competence of policy-makers

becomes more important than the policies themselves.

In fact, the real problem is that we don't know our government's thinking on reforms, i.e. which one of these proposals studied by the IFIs the government is whole-heartedly endorsing, or who exactly in the government ever bothers to think through them, let alone own them. We think one major shortcoming in this connection could be the scattered state of economic management. Rather than just coordination of policies, we need policies to be single-handedly formulated and implemented by one powerful ministry. Specifically, time is ripe in our view, to seriously consider setting up an economic ministry, to which all line ministries would report to, and which would have the explicit support and blessing of the Prime Minister. After enhancing its capacity, Turkey's once mighty but now dormant State Planning Organization could be tied to this ministry, with a view to providing strategic advice to the government.

Let us end by putting it all together. We think there is little objectionable to the gist of what Turkey has been trying to do over the past few years: stabilize the macro economy while reforming its supply side. The key problem is that we have not been doing it fast enough and earnestly enough. On top of this, times have now changed. Both the severity of the global crisis and the trade-offs we are facing call for bold action. Ankara has to first shift from a backward-looking and generally rosy discourse, to a deeper and forward-looking one, and then start marketing and implementing it. The cost of unheeding this humble advice could first lead to stagnation, but then eventually to a reassessment of Turkey's well-known vulnerabilities, such as its large corporate sector debt, resulting in even more undesirable outcomes down the road.

Murat Üçer
Global Source Advisor for Turkey and adjunct faculty at Koç University

EU AND TURKEY



IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME

Bahadır Kaleağası

The debate on Turkey's EU accession process has persisted for such a long time that it risks melting like the clocks on Salvador Dali's famous painting. Thus, to start my analysis with its conclusions should not be considered too rushed:

- If negotiated well, Turkey's EU membership treaty may be ready to take effect by 2015.

This would be the corollary of a well implemented institutional process based on two essential official documents: the renewed version of the Accession Partnership for Turkey adopted in unanimity by the 27 EU member states in February 2008 and the National Program for the Adoption of the EU Law released by the Turkish government.

But the achievement of this goal by 2015 also implies that:

- If reformed expeditiously, Turkey may be ready for EU membership by 2014.
- If governed efficiently, the EU may be ready for an enlargement towards Turkey by 2012.
- If analyzed rationally, the international context already justifies such a historical move.

At present though, this process is still waiting to be re-launched. Following four years of passionate engagement, the EU-Turkey relations have been in a relative stalemate since the end of 2005. It is true that in the early hours of 4 October 2005, and officially still on 3 October, the EU Council of Ministers and the Turkish government had finally agreed on the terms for opening the negotiation process. The deal had involved a postponement of a "train crash" over the Cyprus question, an emphasis on the open-ended nature of the process ahead and a last minute revision of Croatia's war liabilities to let this country's accession process move forward in order to satisfy Austrian demands.

Since then a lot happened in Turkish politics with direct implications on the EU process. Almost immediately after negotiations were started, a so-called nationalist resurgence in public opinion surfaced. This was indeed a result of the government's lack of fortitude in pursuit of democratic reforms. Then came the imbroglio related to the legislative and presidential elections of 2007. Turkey's political agenda was distorted by political mismanagement, weak public communication, lost constitutional integrity, increased secular susceptibility, controversial cases before the Constitutional Court, ineffectual military meddling and uncontrolled political greed.

Brussels-Ankara axis

During the three years that followed the day of "3 and a half" October 2005, Ankara proved incapable of rapidly setting up an efficient system of relations with the EU. It inexplicably took several months to finally appoint a Chief-Negotiator, a responsibility which requires Europeanist credentials and credibility. Instead of going to a person who could devote his time fully and with full authority to the task at hand the job went to Mr. Ali Babacan as a supplementary responsibility. Mr. Babacan was then economy minister and now is in charge of foreign affairs. On the ground no other state reform, bureaucratic re-organization, the empowerment of the relevant authorities or a much-needed political mobilization were instigated since negotiations started.

Meanwhile, the relations were also severely hit because of some member countries' own political failures or pathological obsessions. The negative messages flowing from some member state capitals, the apparent appetite for double standards and the obvious reluctance to make a commitment to Turkish



IF REFORMED EXPEDITIOUSLY, TURKEY MAY BE READY FOR EU MEMBERSHIP BY 2014. IF GOVERNED EFFICIENTLY, THE EU MAY BE READY FOR AN ENLARGEMENT TOWARDS TURKEY BY 2012. IF ANALYZED RATIONALLY, THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT ALREADY JUSTIFIES SUCH A HISTORICAL MOVE.

membership because of political expediency further broke the will of the government.

The negotiation process had thus been partly a victim of Ankara's lack of energy and commitment for the three "v"s: visionary, venturesome and vanguard-like. It is not yet time for "V" as in victory for Turkey's European struggle. The government did not show any forceful signs of leadership in producing, communicating and implementing tangible policies lately. The opposition parties have been inactive, generating no serious competition to the government and induce it to move forward. They failed to formulate better policy alternatives and thus to put pressure on the government for a more result-oriented EU membership strategy.

Indeed, the Turkish public administration had developed throughout the decades a significant experience and human capital dealing with the European files. Consequently, Turkey has today well elaborated roadmaps to lead the country in the institutional corridors that could help reach the membership target. Despite weak political leadership, the traffic between Ankara and Brussels has intensified to such an extent that Turkish Airlines finally found it expedient,

as well as profitable, to start direct flights between the two capitals avoiding a stop-over in Istanbul, literally as well as in figuratively.

Variable geo-strategy

Whereas progress in the institutional dimension of Turkey's EU accession process was negligible, the geo-strategic dimension of Turkey's European journey was brought to light in multiple ways:

- Even Nicholas Sarkozy, as the EU President for the second half of 2008, had the "pleasure" to emphasize Turkey's constructive role as an exporter of European security policies towards the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the Middle East. In the consolidation of the Union for the Mediterranean project, pacification of the Russo-Georgian conflict, mediation of talks between Israel and Syria and the Lebanese-Syrian confidence-building initiatives, Turkey was actively engaged as a regional and European power. President Gül's historic visit to Armenia has also opened a wider room for maneuver for Turkey's external relations in a region marked not only by military

confrontation, but also considerable economic interests. Another success of the Turkish diplomacy is highlighted by the 151 votes, out of 193, that Turkey received in support of its bid to serve in the UN Security Council for 2009-



Turkey are among BUSINESSEUROPE's priorities for a globally more competitive EU. Increasingly economic and political leaders see beyond the EU's actual borders, a larger and better organized single market and political unity. Not only Turkey and the EU, but also the global economy needs that.

The economy strikes back

2010. Turkey won its seat from the contingent allocated to the European continent. Turkish diplomacy will almost be fully integrated to EU's foreign policy sphere with the eventual political deal between Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus, a development cautiously expected within a few years.

- If Turkey plays increasingly a positive role in Europe's neighborhood, this is not only thanks to its military capacities, legacy of its NATO membership or Euro-Asian geography, but also on the basis of its sophisticated pluralistic identity. According to many European leaders such as Barroso, Zapatero, Bildt, Steinmeier, Brown and Karamanlis, Turkey's EU membership will obviously mean the most significant extension of Europe's cultural geo-strategic reach. From the

The existing customs union with the EU offers a solid ground on which it is easier for Turkey to build the economic dimension of the accession process. A recent report from Deutsche Bank pleads to rid the Turkey debate of dogma and to conduct a reasoned debate about the costs and benefits of the Turkish EU accession. "The most common economic argument against Turkish membership is the following: Turkey is too poor to join the EU. According to the World Bank data, per capita income is higher in Turkey than in Bulgaria and Romania, while Romania's agricultural sector is even larger than Turkey's as a share of GDP. On the other hand, Turkey has by far the largest share of its workforce deployed in agriculture (25% versus Poland's

MARCEL PROUST HAD DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY OF TIME. HE SOUGHT SOME PERMANENCE IN A WORLD WHERE THINGS, PEOPLE, IDEAS, AND FEELINGS SEEMED EPHEMERAL. BOTH FOR THE EU AND TURKEY, EXTRACTING THE PERMANENT AND THE SIGNIFICANT FROM THE TRANSITORY AND THE TRIVIAL IS THE GREAT CHALLENGE OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Balkans to the Caucasus and the Middle East, the perspective of a successfully integrated Turkey as a secular European democracy is taking shape. This is the anchor that the European project needs in order to enhance and radiate the universalism of its values and credibility of its soft power.

- The Confederation of European Business keeps encouraging and guiding the EU governments to implement reforms for a more entrepreneurial, innovative, energy-efficient, job-creating and growth-generating Europe. The global financial crisis re-emphasizes how the European business community was right in seeking more political leadership and vision. The enlargement to Croatia and



15%). Add to this the fact that Turkey's economy is larger in terms of GDP and population and it is clear that an unreformed EU agricultural policy could come under strain following the Turkish accession. (The same applies more generally to EU financial policies.) Should this not provide the EU with an incentive to reform what is in obvious need of reform? Will Turkey not have a much more modern and developed economy by the time it joins, making integration much more manageable?"

In fact, the combined effects of Turkey's customs union with the EU, its slowly but persistently progressing accession negotiations, its adherence to EU's co-operation programs in various fields from the scientific research to environmental protection and its society's self-determined European orientation create a triple advantage stimulating Turkey's integration to Europe:

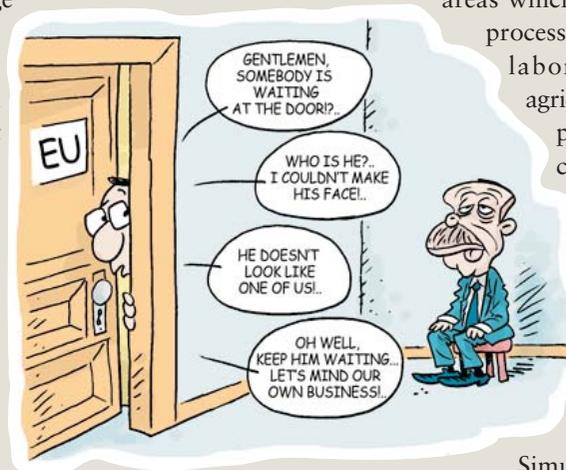
- First of all, the customs union involves not only the free movement of industrial goods but also the alignment of Turkey with several EU policies such as the external commercial policy, competition legislation, standards and certification, intellectual property rights ... All are among the domains traditionally at the origin of the toughest difficulties for the candidate countries. Moreover, Turkish companies exporting or operating worldwide are overwhelmingly acting as European companies in the way they function, produce and keep their accounts. As for the Turkish customers, they are increasingly demanding European standards.

- Secondly, being in a customs union with the EU has transformed the Turkish business landscape into a more transparent, predictable, resilient and competitive European field. Turkey has forged its status as the most dynamic and largest emerging market in and around Europe with an average growth rate of 7 percent in the last seven years. More than 90 percent of Turkey's exports are now industrial goods and it now ranks among the top five European countries in the sectors of automotive and parts, textile, household electronics, telecommunications, glass, cement, steel, ceramic tile, jewelry and private boat construction. From tourism to banking, the Turkish services sectors have also become globally competitive, the ICT sector has marked a yearly growth rate of 12 percent and the foreign direct investment flows to Turkey have jumped from 1.2 billion euros in 2001 to 16 billion euros in 2007. By 2008, Turkey demonstrated impressive resilience compared with the European average in facing the shock waves of the international financial crises.

- Last but not least, Turkey's economic integration to the EU highlights also an important political message: "all eventual scenarios other than full-membership are already part of the present situation and irrelevant for the future". The status quo is not sustainable in the EU-Turkey relationship. Just like the European integration process itself, Turkey's EU accession process is like a bicycle. You need to keep pedaling otherwise you would fall.

Timely challenges

A new momentum is crucially necessary in the EU-Turkey relationship. This will require a Turkey that is better focused to its European homework. Not only for the legislative alignment, but also in dealing with all other major reform areas which ought to support the integration process: public administration, education, labor market, informal economy, agriculture, regional development. On its part, the EU just needs to act more coherently, refrain from harming its credibility further, thus avoiding Turco-phobic political discourses for domestic consumption that manipulate public opinion. Turkey should expect the EU to proceed with the opening of all negotiation chapters once the reasonably formulated benchmarks are met.



Simultaneously, more attention should be paid to the task of better communicating the truth about the real meaning of enlarging the EU to the European public: "Turkey will be an EU member only when it will solve its problems in relation with the fulfillment of the conditions of membership and the contributions of this membership to Europe will have become evident". Presenting to the Turkish public a more rational and balanced view of a European future is also essential. As the Turkish Nobel literature laureate Orhan Pamuk warns, "fomenting hostility towards Turkey in Europe unfortunately leads to the development of a stifling, anti-European nationalism in Turkey."

The French novelist Marcel Proust had devoted his life to unraveling the mystery of time. He sought some permanence in a world where things, people, ideas, and feelings seemed ephemeral. Both for the EU and Turkey, extracting the permanent and the significant from the transitory and the trivial is the great challenge of the 21st century.

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BEYMEN

Turkey and the Middle East: Ideology or Geo-Politics?



İbrahim Kalın

Writing forty years ago in the “Journal of Contemporary History” Andrew Mango, the prominent British historian of modern Turkey, noted Turkey’s potential new role in the Middle East as a “middle-power.” He observed that “Turkey is socially and technologically the most advanced country of the Muslim Middle East. If present trend continues, then in a short time, much shorter than one would imagine, it could become once again the most convenient and cheapest source of supply of goods which the Arab countries have been taking from it throughout history... Not only trade but also the success of such cultural schemes as the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara depends in the last resort on the continued growth of a technological society in Turkey.”

Mango’s optimistic forecast for Turkey’s adventures to its East has not come true at the time. But Turkey’s profile in the Middle East is rising today and this is registered by some as a new beginning in Turkish foreign policy. Some see this new direction as a result of Turkey’s disenchantment with the policies of its traditional Western allies. The common perception is that while Turkey provides security for NATO and the Western bloc in general, Turkey’s security concerns are not taken seriously by its Western allies. From the PKK terrorism and the Kurdish issue to Cyprus, Iran, Iraq and the Caucasus, there is a sense of frustration that permeates the Turkish attitude towards European and American policies. Certain EU countries, while acknowledging Turkey’s strategic importance for the EU, are quite explicit about their unwillingness to support a process of negotiations that will grant Turkey full membership. Western powers implement confrontational

policies in Turkey’s immediate neighborhood with total disregard to Turkey’s regional concerns. A line of argument one often hears is that the Justice and Development Party (AKP) is exploiting this state of affairs to weaken Turkey’s traditional alliance with the West. But is this really the case?

It is true that Turkey is currently engaged in a number of initiatives in the Middle East and elsewhere, and they go beyond the traditionally timid and over-cautious foreign policy outlook of Turkish governments. Under the AKP, Turkey is willing to take risks in the most volatile region of the world. As a committed member of NATO, Turkey is treading a carefully charted middle path between political loyalties and geo-strategic realities from Iraq, Iran and Lebanon to most recently the Caucasus. With its relatively bold moves, Turkey seems to have made the big jump not only into a post-Cold War time zone but also into post-modern geo-politics: the best way to protect the nation-state is to act as if it does not exist! In other words, stay within your borders, respect others’ but act as if the borders have disappeared. The future of the nation-state depends on its ability to adjust itself to the new realities of a very complex and sophisticated process of simultaneous globalization and regionalization. Not surprisingly, as Turkey eyes a post-nation-state strategic outlook, it comes back to its past experiences, dreams and aspiration in its greater hinterland. Turkey’s post-modernity seems to be embedded in its Ottoman past.

Despite its detractors, the new foreign policy outlook is discussed, questioned, formulated and eventually shared by a growing number of domestic and foreign policy circles,



diplomats, analysts, academics, journalists, businessmen, NGOs, community leaders, and others. So, what is exactly happening here? Is Turkey's increasing engagement and presence in the Middle East a completely new phenomenon generated and sustained by AKP's domestic policy agenda? Is it a result or sign of the "Islamization" of Turkish foreign policy? Or is it an adjustment and expansion of Turkey's overall aspiration to be a strong regional force in its neighborhood? If Turkey is diversifying its foreign policy agenda, why and how is it doing it?

One key question is whether this diversification and reshuffling of Turkish foreign policy is driven by ideology or by an agenda of *realpolitik*. Ever since the traumatic loss of the Ottoman Empire, Turkish policy makers have seldom appealed to anything like the American doctrine of "manifest destiny" as the guiding principle of an interventionist and expansionist foreign policy. Robert Kagan, for instance argues in his *Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* that the US foreign policy has always been expansionist and interventionist. In contrast Turkish foreign policy makers, aware of their cultural, religious and historic ties with nations from Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania to Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and parts of the Middle East, have pursued policies that reflect, more than anything else, the realities of a newly born nation-



state caught up between the power plays of world's super powers since the 19th century. While ideological preferences have kept Turkey away from playing any significant role in Middle Eastern affairs for a long stretch, geo-political considerations are inviting it back to the backyard of the Ottoman Empire. It is not so much ideology as geo-political necessity that drives Turkey today to engage with a multitude of regions from the Balkans to the Middle East.

It would be an oversimplification, however, to say that Turkey has been completely absent from the Middle East. With different degrees and scales of engagement, Turkey has

been part of several regional initiatives including the Sadabad Pact (1937) and the Baghdad Pact (1955) since the time of Atatürk, the founder of the modern Turkish Republic. The Turkish model of secular modernization has kept Turkey from being part of much of the history of the modern Middle East after the 1930s. But at the same time the Turkish policy makers have followed more or less a pragmatic approach



towards the region. While pursuing a policy of non-interference, Turks have been acutely aware of the implications of what goes on just outside their borders. The large number of Turks living in Western Thrace and the large number of Kurds living in Iraq and Iran (and to a lesser extent in Syria) have always made Turkey anxious about its border security and internal stability.

But one can also mention some other facts: Turkey's on and off engagements with the Palestinian issue, its being one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the Palestinian Liberation Organization, its early membership in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) whose current Secretary General Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu is from Turkey, its numerous bilateral and multilateral relations with Arab and Muslim countries, free trade zone agreements, diplomatic relations, economic partnerships, security agreements, and so on. More recently and, one must add unprecedentedly, Turkey has been invited to several Arab League meetings.

In short, Turkey's Middle East engagements go back a long way. But Turkey's interest to expand and diversify its foreign policy extends to other areas as well. For instance, the Turgut Özal era in the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a considerable increase in the relations between Turkey and the newly independent central Asian Republics. Even though

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Süleyman Demirel's attempt to create a Turkic world "from the Adriatic Sea to the Chinese Wall" turned out to be an empty slogan, Turkish policy makers and non-governmental actors did take notice of Turkey's potential in neighboring regions that stretched from the Balkans to the Caucasus and beyond. Özal did not hesitate to be part of the US-led Western alliance to drive Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait in the first Gulf war. His search for a new modality and multiple orientations in Turkish foreign policy was based on a perceptive and somewhat anxious reading of the dawn of a new era in international politics: If Turkey was to survive in the post-Cold War world of the 20th (and now the 21st) century, it had to revisit the real and imaginary borders of the old world order. This was coupled with the concern of Turkish policy makers that the end of the Cold War meant the fading away of Turkey's strategic significance in the international system. One way of responding to this new precarious situation was to pursue a pro-active policy in Turkey's adjacent regions while maintaining Turkey's traditional Western orientation.

While Turkish policy circles were assessing the new situation with anxiety and hope, the Justice and Development Party which came to power in 2002, sought to revitalize Turkey's EU membership process and increase Turkey's engagement in the Middle East at the same time. When Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu became the top foreign policy advisor under the new AKP Government, his book *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* ("Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position") came to be seen as the new bible of Turkish foreign policy, giving an intellectually authoritative voice to Turkey's new aspirations. The main argument of the book was based on an insight shared by many regardless of their place in the Turkish ideological spectrum: the value of a nation in the complex web of international relations depends on its geo-strategic location. Turkey is perfectly situated across the different geo-political and civilizational fault lines that unite the Euro-Asian landmass with the Middle East and North Africa. This means that a good part of world politics related to energy and security, among others the two vital issues of the current international order, is destined to be shaped in Turkey's immediate neighborhood. Turkey's geo-strategic position, Davutoğlu further argued, is reinforced by its historical

and cultural ties to the main lands of the Ottoman Empire pushing Turkey to a natural position of regional leadership. Also implicit in Davutoğlu's argument was a shift from the classical model of the nation-state to the new civilizational framework of analysis that includes a new understanding of globalization and regional cooperation.

It would be thus too simplistic to explain Turkey's rising profile in the Arab world and the Middle East with the so-called "Islamic" credentials of the AKP leadership alone. Political personalities play a significant role in international relations. The personal investment and engagement of a political leader makes a difference in times of normalcy as well as crisis. To their credit, both President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have taken risks to open up new venues of engagement and influence for Turkey. But it is equally true that strong personalities do not come out of the blue. They emerge at the intersection of a number of factors. Their strategic role goes beyond their personal genuises and individual heroisms.

As far as Turkey's new activism in Middle Eastern politics is concerned, there is as much continuity as there is novelty. The former Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's two visits to Syria in 2000 to attend Hafez Asad's funeral and in 2005 to pay an official visit to that country disprove the commonly held view that Turkey's Middle East initiatives are due solely to AKP's Islamic roots and special ties in the Arab world. Sezer, who, far from being an impartial president, was openly opposed to AKP on key policy issues, did not cancel his visit to Damascus in spite of considerable American pressure. His visit played a significant role in improving Turkish-Syrian relations at a time when the future of that relationship was unknown and even fraught with political risks domestically and regionally. Today, Ankara has not only developed a warm and functional relationship with Damascus but it is also facilitating the Syrian-Israeli talks with the belated and tacit blessings of Washington. One can also mention Sezer's visit to Iran in 2002 when he became the first Turkish president to visit the Turkish-Azeri regions of Iran and gave a lecture on the virtues of Atatürk and Kemalism in Tehran! As early as 1995 a United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Report on Turkey in the post-Cold War era detected the new parameters

and dynamics of Turkish foreign policy. The Report summary noted that, “the end of the Cold War seemed to portend a decline in Turkey's strategic importance to the West; however, the political changes in the world since 1989 have also loosened the constraints within which Turkey can act. As a result, Ankara's foreign policy has been redirected from its strictly western orientation to one in which the countries of the Middle East have become potentially more significant.”

Turkey, the Middle East and the reconfiguration of the global power structure

In its new foreign policy openings, Turkey is responding to the fundamental changes taking place in the international system and in its immediate neighborhood. The current international order is functioning without a center or with multiple centers, which amounts to the same thing. The center(s) of the world are up for grabs, and there are no guaranteed winners on the horizon. The talk about a “post-American world”, to use the title of Fareed Zakaria's recent



book on the state of American power, is increasingly turning into a debate about a post-imperial America on the one hand, and the “Rise of the Rest” on the other. It remains to be seen how the survival instincts of American power will play out in world politics. Yet one thing is clear: gone are the times to see the world from a solely American, or European or Russian point of view.

Like the rest of the non-Western world, the Middle East and the larger Muslim world are responding to the unjust structure and costly misdeeds of the international order. They watch the catastrophic failures of super power politics with fear, anxiety and frustration. Having lost hope in the ‘system’, millions either go nihilistic and give up on everything or look for a form of measured regionalism. Part of the appeal Turkey is generating in the Middle East is a function of widespread disillusionments elsewhere.

The internal debate in the Arab and Muslim world, at this



juncture, is therefore as interesting as the ruminations about the future of American or Russian or Chinese power. It is a soul-searching process and hence painful. It reveals the frustrating limits of the so-called Arab awakening that has produced more rhetoric than action. Most of the Arab world today is taken hostage by the memories of a glorious past, a painful and miserable present and a precarious future, unknown yet filled with promises. While one would expect that such a state of mind would produce a healthy dose of constructive self-criticism, it deepens the sense of alienation, disenfranchisement and powerlessness. Occasionally it even breeds self-hatred as one observes in some of the off-balance criticisms of Arab societies by Arab intellectuals. What underlies all of this is the ability, or lack thereof, to reclaim one's own agency and his/her long-forgotten place in history. Turkey is seen as one of the few sane countries that are reclaiming their agency in today's world.

Lest we think this is simply ideology spiced with past nostalgia and empty heroism, it is important to point out that this is an agenda driven as much by self-perceptions as by geo-political and economic imperatives. Nobody wants to live in abject poverty but billions do. Nobody wants to live in constant fear of political uncertainty and instability but millions do. Nobody wants to be tossed around like a second-class citizen of the world but many are. Nobody wants to be stigmatized for the ills of the international system but countless communities and nations are. This feeling of disempowerment cuts so deep in the Middle East and the Muslim world that any act of defiance including the theatrical salvos of the Iranian President Ahmadinejat finds resonance with the voiceless millions.



Middle Eastern nations are responding to these new realities to the extent that they have political capital and institutional capacity for them. And it is a painfully slow and frustrating process. The “Turkey debate” in the Middle East is tied into this larger debate of reclaiming agency and fashioning a new sense of identity. On its part, Turkey is a modern nation-state that is just beginning to act like the self-conscious heir of an empire whose power of imagination still hovers over those of Turks, Arabs, Persians, Kurds, Bosnians, Macedonians and others in its vast neighborhood. Willingly or unwillingly, Turkey is at the center-stage of the fault lines of Euro-Asian and Middle Eastern geo-politics. The recent crisis in the Caucasus proved once more that Turkey does not have the luxury of turning its back on history and geography. Take it as a blessing or a curse Turkey will remain in the middle of the international maelstrom.

It is important to note that Turkey’s regional and international profile is rising not only in the Middle East but also in other areas. Turkey is improving its relations with Russia, China, India, Japan and a host of other countries in an attempt to open up venues for Turkey’s new economic, political and civil entrepreneurs. A recent example outside the Middle East is the much discussed and largely successful visit of President Gül to Yerevan to overcome the decades-long impasse between Turkey and Armenia. None of these initiatives are seen as an alternative to Turkey’s traditional and more institutional alliance with Europe and the US. In fact, Turkey’s active involvement in the Middle East (and most recently the Caucasus) strengthens its position and image in the European Union. The reason is simple: practically all major European countries are involved in Middle East politics. The EU is host to numerous programs and initiatives related to the region,

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running more programs in occupied territories of Palestine, for instance, than many Muslim nations combined. By investing in regional issues, Turkey does not lose its rapport with the EU; to the contrary, it deepens its strategic relevance for its EU partners because the EU can effectively use Turkey's unique position in the region to secure peace and stability in the Middle East.

Turkey's aspirations to become a regional player while strengthening its position in the Western bloc (e.g., by becoming a full EU member) force it to be more active and engaged in the Middle East as well as in other adjacent regions. According to Davutoğlu, the new Turkish foreign policy is based on five principles that position Turkey as a "center-country" in its region. These five principles include a balance between security and democracy; "zero-problem policy with neighbors", developing relations with neighboring regions and beyond, "multi-dimensional foreign policy", and "rhythmic diplomacy". The extent of a successful implementation of these principles is a subject for another discussion. But one thing is clear: Turkey's semi-independent policies frustrate some because they reveal the catastrophic failure of American policies in Iraq, Iran, Palestine and Afghanistan. But paradoxically, every failure of the international system gives hope to voices of political reform in the region. And Turkey silently moves along to build more social and political capital.

The normative dimension of Turkish foreign policy

This is where a major challenge comes up for the next stage of Turkish foreign policy: can Turkey follow a normative policy towards the Arab world, the Middle East and the Muslim world? What is the extent to which Turkey can support and promote an agenda of democratization, good governance, accountability, human rights, women's rights, minority rights, transparency and representative democracy? As result of its principle of non-interference, Turkey has always stayed away from such thorny issues but a plethora of criticisms has been lashed out at oppressive regimes in the region in private discussions and non-official circles. At its best, the officials have remained pragmatic, i.e., silent about issues of social justice and political representation. At its worst, criticisms have been made with a condescending and occasionally racist

attitude to show how Turkey as an ally of the West and a member of Western civilization is privileged to be different from those backward Middle Eastern societies.

While one would hope for a normative dimension in the next phase of Turkish foreign policy, there are two serious problems that prevent such an overture. The first is the social and political capital Turkey has vis-à-vis the countries in the region. Compared to other Muslim countries, Turkey can take pride in its checkered history of democracy and democratic institutions but almost half a dozen military interventions and the continuing influence of non-democratic forces within the Turkish political system make it susceptible to valid criticism. As Turkey tries to democratize and harmonize its laws and policies with the EU *acquis*, the enlargement of the sphere of civil liberties is seen by a minority yet powerful elite as eroding the secular foundations of the Republic.

Putting aside the problems of a fully functioning democracy, the current state of the Kurdish issue alone cripples Turkey's ambitions to speak with confidence about democracy, transparency and human rights in the Middle East. If Turkey fails to start a process of normalization on the two fundamental issues of religion (threat of "Islamism") and ethnicity (threat of "Kurdish separatism"), the two life-and-death issues of the Turkish Republic since its founding, she will not be able to consolidate its social and political future. Plus, Turkey is yet to win the hearts and minds of Arab elites to strengthen regional partnerships. The recent popularity of such Turkish soap operas as *Iblamurlar Altında* shown in Arab TV channels as *Lost Years* could be the beginning of something very interesting. But one would need more than the entertainment industry to lead a more democratic and prosperous future for the region.

The second problem pertains to the way the talk and walk of democracy has been shaped and tainted by the costly adventures of the Bush administration. Going back to the business of nation-building after 9/11, the US administration promoted democracy as a long term solution to radicalism and terrorism and invaded Afghanistan and Iraq. But the flagrant record of US administrations in supporting autocratic regimes turned calls for democratization into a chimera. The mismanagement of Iraq and the spread of ethno-sectarian

politics in the name of Iraqi democracy further damaged the discourse of democracy and political reform. The lowest point came in 2006 when Hamas came to power through a highly transparent and successful democratic election. The entire discourse of democracy and reform was replaced by growing concern over ‘stability’ (read as “status-quo”).

In all of these, the Turkish aspirations to encourage political



reform in the region got a big hit. The AKP government was and is accused domestically of being a stooge in the American plot of the Broader Middle East and North African initiative, whose goal is to promote democratization and political reform in Arab and Muslim countries. The hardliner secularist-Kemalist elites are furious with America for supporting the AKP governments, which they allege the US is supporting as part of its larger project of promoting ‘moderate Islam’ and projecting Turkey as such a model to other Muslim countries. In a famous speech, Tuncer Kılıç, a retired general and former secretary general of the National Security Council, said that “Turkey should protect its secular state and territorial integrity against Western efforts to promote moderate Islam and Kurdish independence”. Under such circumstances the then foreign minister Abdullah Gül’s call to Muslim countries to “clean our backyards first” in 2005 thus fell on deaf ears. Ever since then, neither the Turkish politicians nor the Bush administration officials have talked about democracy or political reform. And they are unlikely to do so for some time to come.

Despite this critical shortcoming, the recent examples of inspiring people beyond the Turkish national borders include a long list of foreign policy engagements. The first example is the Turkish Parliament’s refusal to allow US troops to use Turkish territory to invade Iraq in 2003. This unexpected result strained US-Turkish relations and led to numerous fall-out scenarios between the two allies. After several years of dangerous upheavals, however, the US-Turkish relations are back on track with a renewed sense of commitment to peace

and stability in the region. What is new and different, however, is the improved image of Turkey in the Middle East. Despite its refusal to take part in the war, Turkey has remained active in Iraq, and this has given her some leverage in the current flows of Iraqi politics.

Iraq remains a major source of concern for Turkey. Instability in the heartlands of Iraq means more violence and thus a security threat. Stability in Northern Iraq that feeds the Kurdish aspirations of independence also means trouble for Ankara. The Turkish government has taken some small steps to improve relations with Iraqi Kurds for the situation in northern Iraq is increasingly becoming a pivotal issue for the direction that Turkey’s own Kurdish problem will take. The Turkish consulate has been reopened in the volatile city of Mosul and the Turkish Airlines now has regularly scheduled flights to Baghdad as well as to the two Kurdish cities of Arbil and Sulaymaniya. Combining effective diplomacy with military action, Turkey is trying to gain her friends back in Iraq without compromising on her key security concern: PKK terrorism. At the end of the day, Ankara has no choice but to follow an effective regional



policy to contain the Kurdish issue before it becomes an issue of “Kurdistan” for Turkey.

The unprecedented course of Turkish-Syrian relations over the last decade underlies Turkey’s willingness to pursue a combined policy of strong regionalism and cautious internationalism. In contrast to the US policy of isolation against Syria, the Turkish government has utilized the new ground established in 1999 when Syria agreed to stop sponsoring PKK camps in its territory. This was a turning point in the bilateral relations between the two countries. Today, Ankara is further improving its relations with Damascus with practically no opposition from Washington. The fact that Nancy Pelosi, the speaker of the House of Representatives, visited Syria in April 2007 with a bipartisan delegation confirms the extent of the internal US debate on Bush’s failed policy towards Syria (and Iran). Turkey’s active engagement with Syria has more supporters in the Washington policy circles



than it had several years ago. And this is not lost on many observers in the region. What is also not lost is the moral boost and exhilaration the Syrians got from a match between Turkey's Fenerbahçe and the Syrian football team watched by the Turkish Prime Minister and the Syrian President at a time when Syria was trying hard to get itself out of a suffocating self-containment and years of isolation. Emotions continue to matter as much as hard politics.

Besides Iraq and Syria, Turkey shares a strategic border with Iran. The Turkish policy towards Iran in the 1980s and early 90s has been largely shaped by concerns over the impact of the Iranian revolution of 1979 and its agenda of exporting the revolution to fellow Muslim countries. Even though the secularist establishment and the Turkish military have perceived nothing but ideological confrontation between a secular-Kemalist Turkey and an Islamist-revolutionary Iran, geo-political realities and economic imperatives have forced the two to work together on a number of issues. Besides general border security, Turkey's concern to contain and stem the rise and spread of a pan-Kurdish movement to its east and south has led to closer cooperation with Tehran than one would normally expect. The 23-billion dollar natural gas agreement with Iran signed in 1996 under the coalition government of Necmettin Erbakan was as much dictated by Erbakan's attempt to make up for lost time in relations with Muslim countries as by Turkey's energy dependency. The same can be said for the steady increase of trade volume between Turkey and Iran. While Turkey does

not want to see a nuclear Iran, the perception of Iran as a member of the infamous "axis of evil" remains an exclusively American narrative. As far as regional rivalry is concerned, both countries have ambitions (probably Iran more than Turkey) but both also know the limits of their sphere of influence. Ankara is currently more concerned about the clear and present danger of PKK terrorism than a future threat of Iranian nuclear program, though a nuclear Iran will be a serious issue for Turkey as well as for the other countries in the region.

The infamous visit of the Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal to Turkey in February 2006 was another potentially explosive move and infuriated certain circles in Washington DC and Tel Aviv. Yet even this has not led to a collapse of Turkish-Israeli relations. Instead, it has moved the relations from a strictly military partnership, which was a reaction to Syria's harboring of PKK in the 1990s, to a politically more balanced and economically more lucrative context. The Mashaal visit was part of an attempt to give some political space to the newly elected Hamas leadership, the so-called "rogue actors" of the region, to adjust themselves to the new political realities of Palestine and the Middle East. Despite Turkey's efforts to bring Hamas into the political mainstream, the 2006 Palestinian elections turned out to be the beginning of an unforeseeable turmoil and civil strife among the Palestinian factions. The whole American discourse of democratization and political reform went down the drain. Yet again Turkey was given some credit for trying to play a constructive role in the world's most difficult political conflict.

There are other instances in Turkey's recent Middle East policy that point to a renewed sense of confidence and broader understanding of the region. One can mention the sending of about 1,000 Turkish troops to Lebanon after the Israeli-Lebanese war in 2006. The issue has led to a heated debate in public opinion as well as in the Parliament, proving once more the narrowing gap between domestic and foreign policy. The AKP government has made a number of gestures to attract the Gulf capital along with other FDI. Even though below its potential, Turkey has been able to attract the attention of some serious investors in the region. In an unprecedented move, the Saudi King Abdullah has visited Turkey twice within just sixteen months. Numerous other heads of states from practically all Arab countries have visited Turkey and their Turkish counterparts have reciprocated. While not yielding any concrete results, one may appreciate the symbolic significance of the meeting between Hamid Karzai and Parwaz Musharraf in Ankara or Mahmud Abbas and Shimon Peres at the Turkish Grand Assembly or EU's Javier Solana and Iran's Ali Larijani in the Turkish capital. Still, one may consider the potential of the Ankara Forum headed by TOBB to improve the economic conditions of Palestinians.

Turkish soft power and the rise of a new geo-politics

What is new and exciting in all of these is the willingness of the new generation of Turkish policy makers and civil society actors to engage in the corridors of regional diplomacy while maintaining good relations with traditional power-holders, i.e., US, Europe and Russia. This is more than a matter of will. It heralds a new imagination, a different geo-strategic map and a new set of principles by which Turkey wants to engage its immediate neighbors and global actors. Skeptics see these attempts as too ambitious, too idealistic, and far from achieving concrete results. It is true that the pre-Annapolis meeting between Mahmud Abbas and Shimon Peres in Ankara did not end the Palestinian problem. The current talks between Syria and Israel facilitated by Turkey may go nowhere. Turkey may or may not succeed in projecting a post-American Iraq that will be united, democratic, safe and prosperous. It will take more than the will of Turkey to create a post-ethnic and post-sectarian Iraq. Turkey's possible role in bringing Fatah and Hamas together may fail too. To the north, Turkey's "Caucasus Stability and Partnership Platform" may not achieve anything in the short term.

Yet none of these changes the fact that Turkey is moving ahead with a new vision and energy that resonates with the sense of justice, dignity and agency shared by the Arab and Muslim world. For the Arab world and beyond, Turkey's soft power is increasingly becoming a topic of discussion among academics, policy makers, experts, journalists and even businessmen.

Obviously, the issue is more than a matter of academic interest. Turkey's potential to influence its region economically and culturally forces Ankara to take a position "of providing security and stability not only for itself, but also for its neighboring regions". Besides security and stability, Turkey is quickly moving up in the world economic scale. Nearing a GNDP of 700 billion USD, Turkey is now the 16th largest economy of the world and the 7th in Europe. Turkey's ability to attract FDI from all corners of the world is in tandem with its economic growth and its promise for lucrative business. But it is also predicated upon democratic credentials, a system of transparency and accountability, and a reasonable level of political stability. This is what the global investor looks for in any country, and it is certainly true for the Gulf economies of the Arab world that are looking for safe places to invest in the post-9/11 environment of international politics.

The Turkish soft power, however, cannot be explained by the sticks and carrots of American style international relations. As much as Joseph Nye deserves credit for explaining the intricacies of modern power, soft power in the non-Western world involves more than packets of economic incentives or diplomatic gestures. It is grounded in some larger concepts of cultural affinity, historical companionship, geographical proximity, social imagery, and how all of these create a sense of belonging. Combine this with a Turkey that is democratic, strong and prosperous, you have a very different picture of regional dynamics. The old Turkish images of "Arab traitors" and Arab perception of "Ottoman imperialists" speak very little to the realities of Arab and Turkish societies today. A major study of the image of Arabs in Turkish society by SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research has shown that contrary to the common view, positive images of Arabs outweigh negative perceptions among the Turks today.

The new Turkish activism in the Middle East comes against the backdrop of such fragmented perceptions of the other. Yet at its core, Turkey's new interest is driven as much by an agenda of *realpolitik* as by considerations of history and self-understanding. If globalization means the displacement of the nation-state as the primary unit of political analysis in international relations, then Turkey's new foreign policy is embracing the multiple processes of globalization and leaving behind the classical model of modernization. Modernization was top-down, unidirectional and ideology-driven. By contrast, globalization is decentralizing, multi-directional and interest-driven. Turkey's true globalists seem to be happy that Turkey, while remaining a strong and "middle-rank" power nation-state, is developing a new geo-political imagination that goes beyond the limited and mostly insecure self-perception of the classical nation-state.

Ibrahim Kaln is the director of SETA Foundation in Ankara.

new tunes for the album



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THE PERFECT CRISIS REVISITED

The story of the March 1,
2003 motion

Sedat Ergin

1) Prelude/unfortunate timing

On July the 14th 2002, the day Deputy Secretary of Defense Mr. Paul Wolfowitz set foot in Ankara an intense political earthquake was shaking up Turkey.

Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit was ailing and nearly dysfunctional. His health problems had paralyzed the relative political stability which Turkey had been enjoying for the previous three years. The resulting unrest in Mr. Ecevit's Democratic Left Party (DSP) had led to a split.

Almost 60 deputies from the DSP had already resigned including Deputy Prime Minister Hüsametdin Özkan and the Foreign Minister İsmail Cem.



The leader of Mr. Ecevit's coalition partner, the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) Bahçeli had already called for early elections. The glue that held the coalition intact for 3 years had already dissipated. This was the Turkish political scene that welcomed Mr. Wolfowitz who arrived in Ankara to convey the Bush Administration's determination to go ahead with the decision to overthrow the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq and ask Turkey's support for its planned military campaign.

Mr. Ecevit who spent most of his time resting at home under the surveillance of his doctors made an exception on July 16th and agreed to receive the American envoy. Mr. Ecevit had built a reputation for strongly opposing US intentions to resort to the military option against Iraq. Yet it was crystal clear from Mr. Wolfowitz's message that the point of no return for the military option had already been crossed.

Yet, Prime Minister Ecevit told the senior Pentagon official that Turkey would address the Bush Administration's requests within the framework of its strategic partnership with the US.

Paradoxically the very day Mr. Wolfowitz secured this tacit endorsement from the Turkish Prime Minister, six more deputies from Ecevit's party announced their resignations and the Turkish government literally lost its majority in the parliament.

Later that day the coalition leaders gathered in a summit meeting in which they agreed to call for early elections on November the 3rd.

As one could easily conclude, when the Bush administration made its first official demarche with the Turkish government, there were fault lines on the Turkish political landscape. Pressure was building on those fault lines, dragging Turkey towards an era of political uncertainty.

2) Election campaign overlaps with the war plans

The most significant outcome of Mr. Wolfowitz's visit was an agreement to assign the bureaucracies on both sides to begin the preparations for the war effort although the Turkish side made no binding pledge for the final decision.

The understanding reached during this visit was that when the final decision was made the parties would not be caught off guard and no time would be lost.

The visit by the Undersecretary of the Turkish Foreign Ministry Uğur Ziyal to Washington D.C. in the last week of August was the first step in this process.

The visits by Foreign Minister Şükrü Gürel and Treasury Minister Masum Türker to Washington D.C. in September were additional steps in which US plans on Iraq and Turkish expectations including the need for a safety net to help the Turkish economy in case military hostilities broke out were further discussed. October marked the deepening of military planning between the two sides. The list of the American military requests was for the first time officially conveyed to the Turkish side on October the 10th.

It was a detailed list. The rough figure for the number of American troops to be deployed or transmitted in and through Turkey was in the vicinity of ninety thousand. Dozens of air bases, naval ports and air corridors were on the list for possible use.

To the surprise of the Turkish side, the two naval ports of Samsun and Trabzon on the Black Sea coast were also included. The relevance of these ports, which were practically some 400-500 miles away from the Iraqi border, to the military campaign always remained a mystery to the Turkish policy makers.

It is important to note that the American side preferred to



use military channels, in this case SACEUR, for transmitting its requests.

In mid-October after being authorized by Prime Minister Ecevit the Turkish military authorities officially began to conduct detailed discussions with their American counterparts contingency plans for Iraq.

Moreover, in October the Turkish government accepted an American request to let two teams from the Central Intelligence Agency into northern Iraq through the Turkish border. They were called the NILES, that is the Northern Iraq Liaison Elements. They would be working in coordination with the Turkish Special Forces that were already operating in northern Iraq.

In October, another sensitive American request was also accepted by the Turkish government when the National Security Agency was given permission to use Turkish air space for U-2 flights over Iraq. In the month of October while Turkish politicians were fully preoccupied with the election campaign, Turkish and American military establishments were busy working on the modalities of their possible cooperation for a military campaign against Iraq.

Elections were held on November the 3rd. The following day Commander of the Turkish General Staff General Hilmi Özkök left Ankara for an official visit to Washington D.C. and to the headquarters of the Central Command in Tampa to further discuss the military preparations.

The timing of his visit had a symbolic meaning. It showed that irrespective of the outcome of the election the Turkish military establishment was determined to be engaged.

However when Mr. Tayyip Erdoğan, the leader of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) that won the elections delivered his victory speech on the night of November the 3rd, he had no idea that the requests of the Pentagon for the Iraq operation were awaiting the attention of the yet to be formed AKP government.

3) Election results pose question marks

The elections on November the 3rd resulted in the landslide victory of AKP, which received almost 35 percent of the votes and secured nearly two thirds of the seats in the parliament.

For the US policy makers this was good news. It meant a government with a strong mandate. Yet, the election results should have sent early warning signals to the Bush Administration which was planning to rely on Turkey's extensive support for its military intervention against Iraq for several reasons:

First: The AKP was a new player on the political scene. It was founded on August 14, 2001, little over a year before the elections.

Second: It was an eclectic party, but with strong Islamist roots. The majority of its deputies in the past had been

members of the Welfare Party (RP). A significant minority of its deputies came from center right parties. The party was still in the making, it was an unknown entity. It was untested. The majority of the deputies in the party group were newcomers to the parliament.

Third: The majority of the leading members and ministers of the AKP had no experience in national government or in handling the decision-making mechanisms of an administration. Mr. Erdoğan's only experience was limited to his one term as the mayor of Istanbul. He had literally no background in foreign policy or crisis management.

Fourth: The party in many ways was an offspring of the Welfare Party of Mr. Necmettin Erbakan. The Welfare Party had been closed down by the Constitutional Court in 1998 on the grounds that it was advocating a state based on Sharia, the Islamic holy law. This verdict was upheld by the European Court of Human Rights.

Most of the members of the AKP came from a school of thinking which had traditionally resented US policies. Whether they had grown out of their traditional anti-US thinking had not yet been tested. Involving the AKP group in a large scale military operation against a Muslim country like Iraq inevitably was bound to create complications.

The Islamist roots of the AKP were not the only impediment.

- Mr. Tayyip Erdoğan, due to a court verdict, was not permitted to take part in the elections. He therefore was not a member of the parliament. Nor could he serve as prime minister.

- Mr. Abdullah Gül who was one of the pivotal power centers in the party became Prime Minister. It was already apparent that the American side would be facing a dual structure in negotiating with the new Turkish government to open a northern front.

- Moreover, the secular military establishment was not comfortable with the AKP's rise to power. Whether the military and the AKP government would be able to work out a businesslike relationship remained to be seen. It was not difficult to predict that this would not be an easy relationship.

To sum up, all these factors fully deserved the attention of US policy makers. The Bush administration was confident enough to take the risks.

4) From the Crimean war to Iraq

There were still other categories of impediments that were no less important in terms of their potential to jeopardize the plans of the US administration.

- There was consensus among the Turkish policy makers and the public across the board that in 1991, during the Gulf crisis, American pledges to Turkey were not kept and that Turkey had ended up suffering devastating economic losses. The widely held view is that Turkey's economic losses in the 90's resulting from the Gulf war stood somewhere around 45 to 50 billion dollars. This meant there would be need for a generous compensation package this time.

- There was also consensus that president Turgut Özal during the Gulf crisis did not pull a hard bargain with the Bush administration. Nor did he demand and receive firm written pledges. This meant tough negotiations should be expected this time around.

- For the majority of Turks the possibility of a military intervention in Iraq conjured up the memories of PKK terrorism. It is a fact that the power vacuum created in northern Iraq as a result of the Gulf war paved the way for the escalation of the PKK terrorist campaign that ultimately led to the loss of almost 30 thousand people in 15 years.

- One of the consequences of the Gulf war was the creation of a quasi-independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. The majority of the Turks were concerned that a military campaign in Iraq could further consolidate this entity in the north. Moreover the overwhelming view in Turkish public opinion was that if the United States went to war, this could lead to the dismemberment of Iraq. So in the Turkish mindset, the military option meant chaos on all fronts, dismemberment of Iraq, deepening the devastation of the already crisis ridden Turkish economy.

If the American policy makers were to effectively engage Turkey, they had to address all these concerns and expectations. Since a parliamentary decision would be required, sentiments

of the Turkish public would have to be taken seriously.

It was the first time that the Turkish Republic was going to host a sizeable foreign army on her territory. The last time Turks had seen a sizable foreign army -except the invading armies at the end of the first world war- was some 150 years ago during the Crimean war when French and British land forces and naval units had been deployed on Ottoman territory.

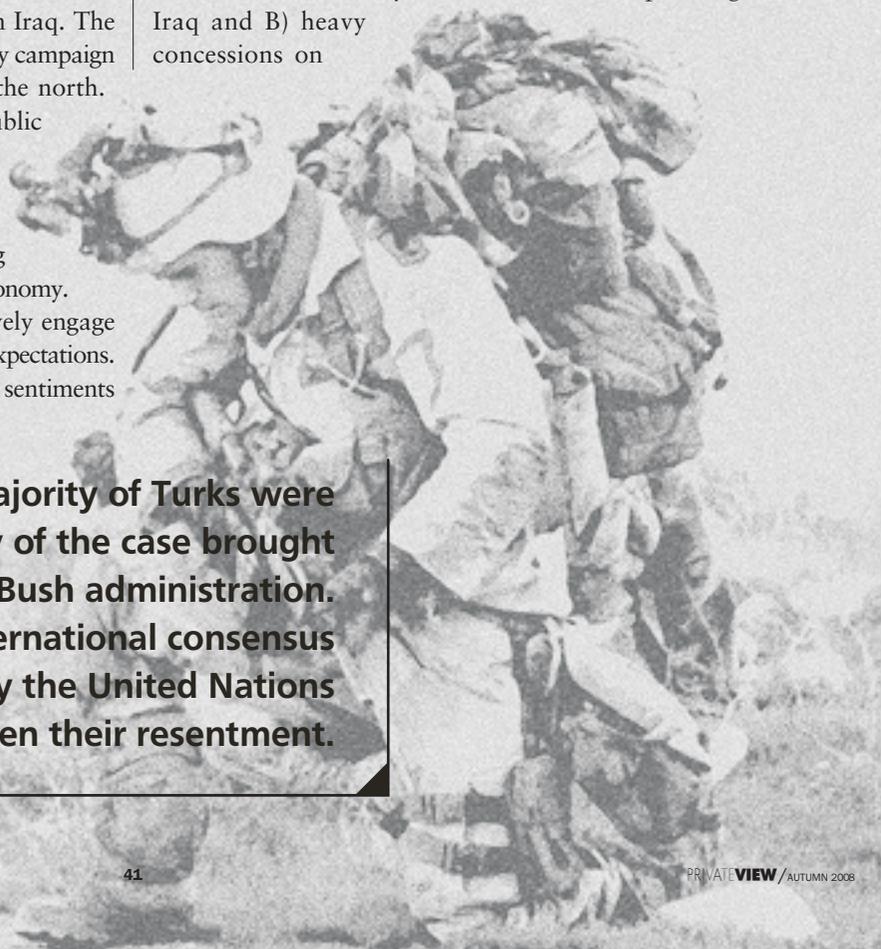
This was to be a totally new experience for the Turks. The question of whether Turkish pride was going to put up with the fact that some 60 to 90 thousand troops would be stationed on Turkish soil for the purpose of invading a neighboring Muslim country remained to be seen.

The overwhelming majority of Turks were never convinced of the validity of the case brought against Iraq by the Bush administration. The fact that there was no international consensus and no mandate extended by the United Nations only helped deepen their resentment. It should have been clear to the US policy makers, even at the outset, that Turkish public opinion would not support the US plans against Iraq, especially given the obvious fact that there was no strong political leadership to prepare the public for war.

Last but not least: At the same point in time when US military requests were conveyed to Ankara, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan also proposed the most comprehensive plan for the permanent settlement of the Cyprus problem. The plan envisioned burdensome concessions from the Turkish side.

To prepare the Turkish public for accepting A) direct involvement in a military option against Iraq and B) heavy concessions on

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Cyprus -all at once- was too big a shock to be absorbed by the Turks or for a newly formed inexperienced government to finesse.

At the end of December when the EU summit in Copenhagen despite nonstop lobbying by Tayyip Erdoğan failed to propose a date for the beginning of accession talks for Turkey's full membership, Mr. Erdoğan's political prestige suffered a severe setback.

Had his efforts succeeded one may assume that his ability to deliver on both the US requests and the Annan plan for Cyprus would have been heightened.

5) Inflation of communication channels

Exactly a month after the Turkish general elections Mr. Wolfowitz was back in Ankara. The objective of his visit was to persuade the Turkish government to conduct site surveys in Turkey for laying the groundwork for the logistics of the military infrastructure for the northern front.

At the second stage, on the

basis of this technical study, the Pentagon was planning to launch the modernization and upgrading of the bases.

Mr. Wolfowitz secured the permission he sought. Prior to his arrival there had already been an interagency agreement in Ankara for granting permission for the site surveys. This was perhaps the most critical decision taken at that stage by the AKP government. With this decision the new government for the first time committed itself formally to the war effort.

The highlight of this visit was the dinner that Mr. Wolfowitz had at the residence of US Ambassador Robert Pearson with Mr. Erdoğan. The most intriguing aspect of this dinner party was the fact that no Turkish guest with any official capacity

was included among the invitees. Turkey was represented by Mr. Erdoğan and three of his advisers, one of them an influential businessman who also served as a back channel between the AKP leader and Mr. Wolfowitz thereafter. It is important to note here that Mr. Wolfowitz left the dinner party with the understanding that there would be a northern front.

However, neither the Foreign Ministry nor the General Staff ever received the official minutes of this meeting. Whether or not Prime Minister Gül received such minutes still remains a mystery. In terms of secrecy, the same pattern was repeated a week later when the same company met with Mr. Wolfowitz in a hotel room in Washington D.C. just before Mr. Erdoğan was to be received by President George W. Bush.

President Bush by inviting Mr. Erdoğan to the White House was elevating the stature of the AKP leader above the Turkish Prime Minister. The irony of this gesture was that it extended political legitimacy to Mr. Erdoğan who was still banned from participating in government under Turkish law.

By these moves the American side initiated an exercise of multi-track diplomacy: back channeling with Mr. Erdoğan through his advisers, military to military contacts, direct contacts

In January while Prime Minister Gül was undertaking a peace effort, visiting various Middle Eastern capitals, to find an honorable exit strategy for Saddam Hussein the US military was preparing site surveys in Turkey designed to facilitate the forthcoming invasion of Iraq.

with the Prime Minister, contacts with the Turkish Foreign Ministry and official negotiations between the diplomatic representatives.

The end result was that there was an inflation of channels. This became a major problem when discrepancies began to surface between the understanding of the official channels and that of the back channels.

What was promised through the back channels often went beyond the limits set in the official channels. It is an open secret that Prime Minister Gül also complained about the back channels and informed his American interlocutors on at least one occasion that the back channels might mislead Washington.

As we have seen, in January and February during the intense bargaining that covered a wide spectrum of difficult issues there were no high-level coordination efforts designed to format and shape the widely dispersed dialogue.

One may only speculate whether a visit or two by the Secretary of State to Ankara could have helped to iron out the misunderstandings and the discrepancies clouding the Turkish-American dialogue.

6) Separation and fragmentation

The first phase of the military preparations went relatively smooth. The site surveys were conducted and a feasibility study drafted by the US Army Corps of Engineers was submitted for the approval of the Turkish government in mid-January.

It envisaged the upgrading of many airfields, roads, railways and building of new installations, most of which were to be located in southeastern Turkey, the very region of the country which had been torn by the PKK terrorist campaign until recently. This plan was the subject of intense discussions between the Turkish and American negotiators for almost three weeks.

Under the Turkish constitution the arrival of American military personnel for the modernization effort required a decision by the parliament. The landing of the US combat forces en route to Iraq and the deployment of their support units in Turkey at the final stage also required the approval of the Turkish parliament.

The government had the option of merging both these issues and requesting a broad permission from the parliament. The passing of such a single motion would have cleared all the constitutional requirements for the northern front.

At this point there was a split among key Turkish players. The Foreign Ministry bureaucracy and the General Staff took the view that there should be a single decree authorizing both phases. (MP) Prime Minister Abdullah Gül took the opposite view and argued that these should be separated.

One of the tactical gains sought by this approach was to place Turkey in a position of strength in the bargaining process so as to get a better deal in terms of economic and political concessions. The AKP government also was trying to buy time to see whether a peaceful solution of the Iraqi problem could



be worked out and also to see whether the UN Security Council would authorize a second resolution for the use of force in Iraq.

It is important to note at this stage that there was a total fragmentation of the policies of the AKP government. This fragmentation was complimented and/or reinforced by perceptual problems as well. It is an undeniable fact that the resolve of the Bush Administration in striking Iraq was not well comprehended by some key players in Ankara who genuinely believed that US resolve was not irrevocable.

To site but a few examples: In January while Prime Minister Gül was undertaking a peace effort, by visiting various Middle Eastern capitals, to find a honorable exit strategy for Saddam Hussein the US military was preparing site surveys in Turkey designed to facilitate the forthcoming invasion of Iraq. At the same time the AKP government was trying to make economic inroads to Saddam Hussein to secure lucrative business deals.

January the 12th is the date that most vividly reflects the fragmentation of the AKP government. This day witnessed the beginning of the site surveys in Turkey by the Pentagon's corps of engineers, the visit by Prime Minister Gül to Iran and the meeting in one of the hidden palaces in Baghdad between Saddam Hussein and Turkish State Minister Mr. Kürşat Tüzmen who had taken some 300 Turkish businessmen with him to give a boost to Turkish exports to Iraq.

It was in this fragmented environment that the AKP government chose to submit a limited motion to the parliament. It authorized only the upgrading of military infrastructure in Turkey with Mr. Erdoğan's approval.

The motion was voted in parliament on February the 6th and approved by a safe margin: 308 deputies voted in favor, 198 against and 9 abstentions. Around 35 deputies from the AKP did not take part in the vote. Overall there were around 55 defections from the AKP. It was a safe margin for the governing party that controlled 363 seats in the parliament out



of the 550. In retrospect, the AKP government may have missed a unique opportunity on February the 6th at a time when Turkish anti-war sentiments had not yet reached their peak. The widely held view in Ankara was that if a full motion which also included the arrival of foreign troops had been submitted to the parliament the chances for its approval at that point in time stood high as opposed to a second vote in the unknown future.

7) The vicious cycle

One of the most critical phases of the Turkish-American dialogue on Iraq were the three sets of negotiations conducted between the two sides during the month of February.

On the first track, Turkish and American negotiators conducted extensive talks on a memorandum of understanding governing the rules and procedures of the arrival of American troops in Turkey, their transit entry into Iraq and the coordination of Turkish and US forces in northern Iraq.

The American side initially asked for a brief protocol laying out the general principles. The Turkish side viewed this as an attempt to obtain a *carte blanche* and insisted upon negotiating a more detailed MOU similar to the Pentagon's field manuals.

Talks were paralyzed at many stages. During these negotiations perhaps the most sensitive issue were the rules of engagement to be applied in northern Iraq when Turkish forces encountered the PKK elements. The American side declined to accept direct authority and wanted to limit the rules of engagement to the condition of self-defense.

Another thorny topic was the transfer of heavy weapons to the Kurdish units of Barzani and Talabani. The Turkish side insisted that they should be allowed to take part and register the process of transfer of arms to the Kurds and the subsequent recollection of those arms once the military hostilities came to

an end. The American side in the initial phase was reluctant.

In general the conduct of the American negotiators created apprehensions on the part of Turkish policy makers that Washington was favoring the Kurds. It created misgivings that the Americans had a hidden agenda with respect to the Kurds in Iraq. These misgivings were not addressed in a timely fashion by the US administration.

At another level some technical issues like A) the taxing of the gasoline which was to be purchased for American aircraft and military vehicles of the Fourth Infantry Division, B) an American request for preferential pricing for gasoline, and C) a controversy over the question of who would pay for the name tags of the incoming US forces also generated tensions during the negotiations.

These complications, as perceived by the Turkish side, were not in line with the urgency of American requests to begin unloading the cargo vessels that were already arriving in the eastern Mediterranean. The imminent arrival of the vessels carrying the heavy armor of the fourth infantry division at the very point when the talks had just convened in Ankara exerted great pressure on the Turkish side.

On several occasions the American side insisted on being allowed to anchor the ships in Turkish ports before the MOU was signed. Ankara was told that failure to grant such permission could lead the ships being redirected via the Suez Canal to head for the southern front.

However at this stage of negotiations these frequently repeated ultimatums were never lived up to. The cargo ships remained idling off the Turkish territorial waters. This consolidated the impression on the Turkish side that the Americans were bluffing and that the northern front was indispensable for the Pentagon.

(Later when the American side informed Turkey in mid-

March that they were in fact relocating the ships to the southern front, this message, not surprisingly, did not get across. Turks thought that their American interlocutors were still bluffing.)

On another track, the bargaining over the economic compensation package went off the rails when Turkish Treasury Minister Babacan asked for 92 billion dollars from President Bush in mid February. President Bush's reply was to compare his request to "Texan style horse trading". Based on quotes by unidentified administration officials, the American press depicted the Turkish government as a carpet dealer in the bazaar. All those stories about carpet trading found voice in the Turkish press, thereby fueling public reaction and anger.

By far the most unpleasant episode was the publication of cartoons in the American press picturing Turkey as a tantalizing belly dancer. The Turks felt offended and degraded.

It is ironic that before the end of February all the difficult issues on all three tracks of negotiations had been satisfactorily resolved. The military MOU, the economic agreement and the political document about Iraq were all finalized. Negotiators shook hands. The American Ambassador Robert Pearson was even authorized to initial the agreements.

Yet by that point in time the Turkish public opinion had already been lost. More importantly, there was no political leadership to prepare the Turkish public on the pro's of the motion pending before the parliament.

8) The accident

To understand what happened on March the 1st, we should revisit the week that began on February the 24th.

Prime Minister Gül, after a long period of hesitation and indecisiveness finally decided to push forward the second motion to the parliament. The motion was first submitted to the cabinet on Monday where it encountered strong resistance from a group of ministers who threatened not to sign it. After a long debate the motion was signed with the understanding that the political responsibility of the cabinet was limited only to the transmitting of the document to the parliament. In other words, the cabinet refused to bear any political responsibility for the legislation.

The vote in the parliament was scheduled for the next day. However on Tuesday the vote was delayed until Wednesday. On Wednesday, it was delayed for the second time. This time the vote was rescheduled for Saturday, that was the day after the regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the National Security Council. The justification brought for the postponement by the AKP was the need to get a final endorsement from the NSC which had already issued a recommendation to the government at the end of January.

The word came out from the AKP group that it was time for the generals to share the burden.

The military establishment had pushed hard for the motion.

It was in a restive mood to enter northern Iraq and perceived this move as a maneuver by the government to put the political responsibility of the motion onto the shoulders of the military.

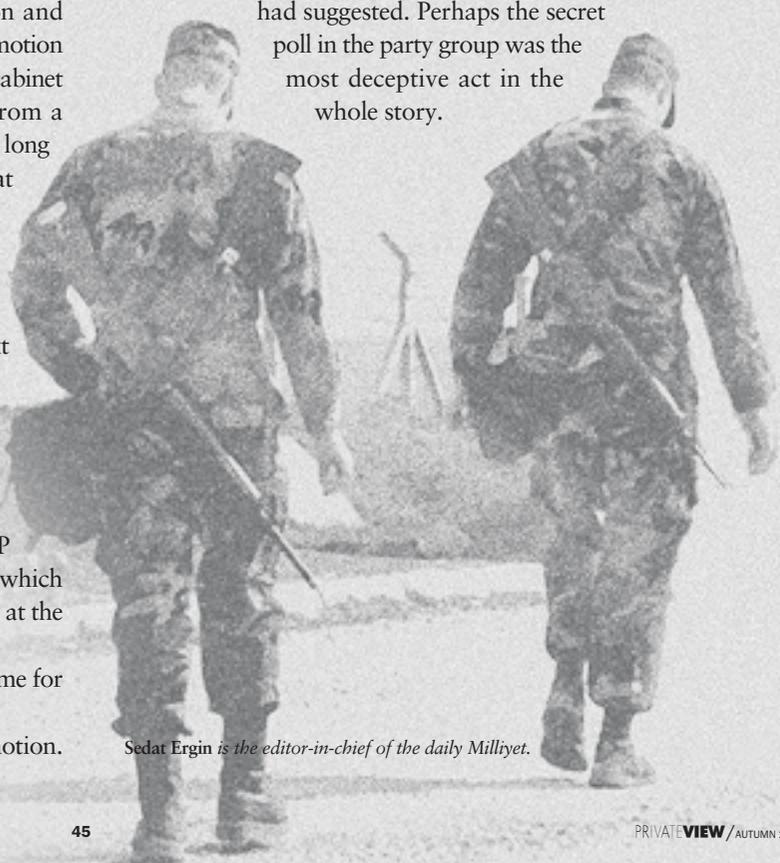
There was another important hindrance.

President Sezer, former head of the Constitutional Court, had adopted a categorically legalistic approach to the matter. And he had gone public on many occasions in expressing his firm view to wait for a second resolution by the United Nations Security Council authorizing the use of force before the Turkish parliament took any action on the matter.

In the meeting of the NSC on Friday a rather weak attempt was made by Prime Minister Gül to seek a strong communiqué. The President who was presiding over the meeting ruled out the request on the grounds that the NSC had already issued a statement at the end of its January meeting and that at this stage it was the responsibility of the parliament to act on the motion.

Next day, on Saturday, before the vote on the floor, the AKP leadership conducted a secret poll in a meeting of the party group where Mr. Erdoğan made a strong appeal in favor of the legislation. The countdown of this unofficial poll showed that there was no cause for concern. Around 50 deputies had voted against the motion.

The leadership of the party was relieved. They decided to move ahead with the floor vote. The opposition was solidly against the motion. As was the Speaker of the Parliament, Bülent Arınç. Although the *yeas* beat the *nays* on the floor, the motion was rejected on a technicality with a very narrow margin. It turned out that the number of defectors from AKP stood around 90 deputies, almost 40 more than the earlier poll had suggested. Perhaps the secret poll in the party group was the most deceptive act in the whole story.



Sedat Ergin is the editor-in-chief of the daily Milliyet.



Memorandum to President-elect Obama

re: Turkey

Mark R. Parris

As your Administration undertakes the Herculean task of restoring America's footing and leadership abroad, some countries will be able to help-or hurt-more than others. Turkey has the potential to place high on either list.

Under your predecessor, US-Turkish relations have been chronically dysfunctional, punctuated by periodic near and real disasters. We have to do better. That will require prompt steps to correct conceptual and structural handicaps that have harmed our approach to Turkey for decades, but which have become acute in recent years.

First, we need to break the habit of thinking of Turkey "as a function of" the crisis of the moment

Turkey's geography is pivotal. It is a place we will need to get over or through to get forces or aid to the next Georgia, or Iraq or Lebanon. It is a place we will need to cope with regional bad actors. It is the best route for getting oil and natural gas out of the Caspian and Central Asia. It is essential to any strategy for coping with a resurgent Russia.

Typically, when we need something from Ankara, we need it "right now." The rest of the time this stable, historically reliable partner doesn't make the cut of the two or three issues Washington can handle at one time. Turkey therefore gets dealt with "as a function of" more pressing issues, each with its own logic, champions and timeline. The urgent consistently trumps the important.

That pattern grates in Ankara. In recent years it has eroded prospects for getting the timely, reliable cooperation we will always need from Turkey in the tough, unpredictable and vital neighborhood it anchors.

Your Administration needs a Turkey policy that integrates the various US interests that converge there, but stands on its own.

Second, we need to be clear about our own vision of Turkey
The last Administration's approach to Turkey was frankly schizophrenic, particularly in regard to the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). Loose rhetoric (vis. Colin Powell's reference to an "Islamic Republic"), the prominence assigned Turkey in the still-born Greater Middle East initiative, and an appearance of close personal relations at the top convinced many in Turkey we supported AKP as an "Islam light" alternative to more radical Islamic movements. Yet the Bush Administration's ambiguity toward attempts by AKP's hard core secularist adversaries to check the ruling party's success at the polls was widely interpreted as indifference. Our mixed signals left both sides of the debate in Turkey frustrated, angry and unsure about US policy at what could have been a defining moment for the Turkish Republic.

We clearly have no interest in injecting ourselves into the process of reconciling Turkey's Muslim and secular identities. But that does not mean we have no interest in its course or outcome. The irreducible US interest in Turkey is that Turkey succeed. However one may define success, it is incompatible with the notion of Turkey as a failed democracy.

Previous administrations have correctly assumed that a Turkey on the road to EU membership cannot fail. We do not have that luxury.

With the EU unable in the near future to provide a framework for Turkey's success, US policy will need to fill the breach. That does not mean we should identify ourselves with any Turkish political party or actor. But we must leave no room for doubt that, absent clear evidence of hostility toward our interests, it will be the policy of your Administration to work with and support those in Turkey who play by the rules and in whom the Turkish electorate places its trust. The corollary

is that we should take every opportunity to discourage elements who may be tempted to supplant or hamstring elected leaders, even if such attempts are dressed in trappings of “the rule of law.”



Third, we need to come to terms with a more activist, self-confident Turkish diplomacy

Turkish foreign policy under the AKP has diverged in significant respects from that of its predecessors. It has assigned greater importance to Turkey’s historic and religious connections to the former Ottoman and broader Muslim world. It has aimed to eliminate or reduce tensions with neighboring states (including, notably Armenia). It has actively sought opportunities to mediate or bring together regional players (Syria-Israel, Russia-Georgia). It has emphatically favored engagement over isolation (Iran, Hamas, Syria). It has launched ambitious independent initiatives (a Caucasus “Platform”).

These shifts reflect a considered, coherent world view among AKP foreign policy makers. They have by and large been undertaken without extensive consultation or coordination with Washington. They have repeatedly produced the appearance of gaps, and in some cases have reflected real gaps, between US and Turkey positions. Those gaps have been cited by some as reflecting an “Islamofascist” agenda aimed at detaching Turkey from its traditional close relationships with the U.S., the West and Israel.

We can prove those pundits correct by reflexively reading the worst into Ankara’s greater diplomatic activism and self-confidence. There is no reason to do so.

Ankara’s foreign policy objectives, as described by AKP foreign policy spokesmen and as reflected in Turkish diplomacy over the past half decade, remain broadly convergent with our own. The Turks know our actions can have enormous impact on their interests and therefore want neither to get on the wrong side of Washington nor to be surprised by us. There are areas (e.g., strategic energy transport) where they consider stronger

American leadership long overdue.

In developing your Turkey policy, we need to be realistic in our expectations. We should not expect Turkey always to be there just because it has tended to be in the past. We should

We clearly have no interest in injecting ourselves into the process of reconciling Turkey’s Muslim and secular identities.

expect some gaps in nuance and tactics. We should not look upon Ankara as cat’s paw, gendarme, or model. But the essential convergence of US and Turkish interests in the region provides ample scope for fruitful, genuinely strategic cooperation in what will inevitably be more than in the past a partnership of equals. Our interest lies in embracing and strengthening that partnership.

Fourth, we need to fix the EUR-NEA disconnect

To do that, we need to correct a defect in our own organization charts. For reasons of self-definition and Cold War logic, Turkey is considered in our national security bureaucracy a European country. It is therefore assigned to the various subdivisions responsible for Europe: the European Bureau (EUR) at the State Department; the European Command (EUCOM) at the Pentagon, etc.

Since the end of the Cold War, however, and especially since 9/11, the most difficult issues in US-Turkish relations have arisen outside of “Europe.” The majority have stemmed from developments in areas which are the responsibility of offices dealing with the Middle East: the Bureau of Near East Affairs (NEA) at State; Central Command (CENTCOM) at the Pentagon.

We pay a price for this mismatch between responsibility and expertise/interest. Key jobs in or relating to Turkey are routinely filled by European specialists often unfamiliar with fast-moving “out of area” crises along Turkey’s borders. Decision-makers in “NEA-land” generally lack exposure to Turkey, do not instinctively think of it when developing policy, and often resist its efforts to get into the game. When the EUR and NEA parts of the bureaucracy do not agree on matters relating to Turkey,

the result is often deadlock, which to the Turks is indistinguishable from simple non-responsiveness. The 2007 crisis over Turkey's threat to invade northern Iraq in pursuit of Kurdish terrorists resulted from just such a deadlock.

Your Administration needs to organize itself from Day One to keep it from happening again. The simplest fix will be to name to the key jobs in both the NEA and EUR pieces of our national security apparatus officials with experience in both regions. A more decisive solution may be to vest authority for coordinating Turkey policy in either a new senior position or in the office of the Vice President.

Fifth, we need a concrete agenda and interagency machinery for Turkey

The necessary complement to closing the EUR-NEA divide is to elaborate a concrete agenda reflecting your Administration's Turkey policy.

At least initially, this should not be something we negotiate with the Turks. It should be a hard-edged, comprehensive statement of what the U.S. wants in its relations with Turkey. It should describe in general terms how we will pursue those objectives. It should assign responsibility for doing so.



The process of developing an agenda will directly address the "function of" problem described above by getting on the table at the outset the range of US interests relating to Turkey and by highlighting potential conflicts and tradeoffs. It will empower those directly responsible for the relationship, notably our Ambassador, in managing competing demands from different US actors. Reflected in our public statements, it will focus public discussion on the breadth and importance of our interests in and around Turkey, insulating the relationship from sallies by hostile single interest groups.

To ensure such an agenda does not become a dead letter, it should be the product of and be supported by robust interagency machinery. The agenda document itself should

be staffed out and approved at the Cabinet level. A standing interagency group chaired by whomever you choose to oversee your Turkey policy should thereafter meet regularly to chart progress, identify problems/opportunities, and move promptly upward for decision matters that cannot be handled at the working level.

Sixth, you and members of the Cabinet should make it a priority to develop strong personal ties to your Turkish counterparts

Turks are not unique in their tendency to do things for people rather than institutions. Turks may be unique in the frequency with which Washington asks them to do hard things. We have a strong interest in making it easy for them to say, "yes." And, as decisions affecting relations with Washington tend to be made at the very top levels in Turkey, this is something that cannot be successfully delegated.

There is simply no substitute for early, sustained face time between you, the Vice President, your Secretary of State and other relevant Cabinet officers and your Turkish counterparts in laying the groundwork for a successful relationship with Turkey during your Administration.

We should not expect Turkey always to be there just because it has tended to be in the past.

First moves matter. Including Ankara on the itinerary of initial trips to the region; ensuring the Turks don't have to fight for a meeting at next fall's UNGA or in scheduling post-inaugural visits to Washington; making sure Turkey is in the first tier of countries given a heads-up on anticipated U.S. moves in their neighborhood will all pay dividends when, inevitably, we need Turkey's help. They will also buy some room for maneuver when backers of an Armenian genocide resolution come calling in advance of the April anniversary.

Mark R. Parris is counselor to the Brookings Institution's Turkey Project. He was former Ambassador to Turkey between 1997-2000.

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To whom does this smile belong?
To whom does this smile belong?
To whom does this smile belong?



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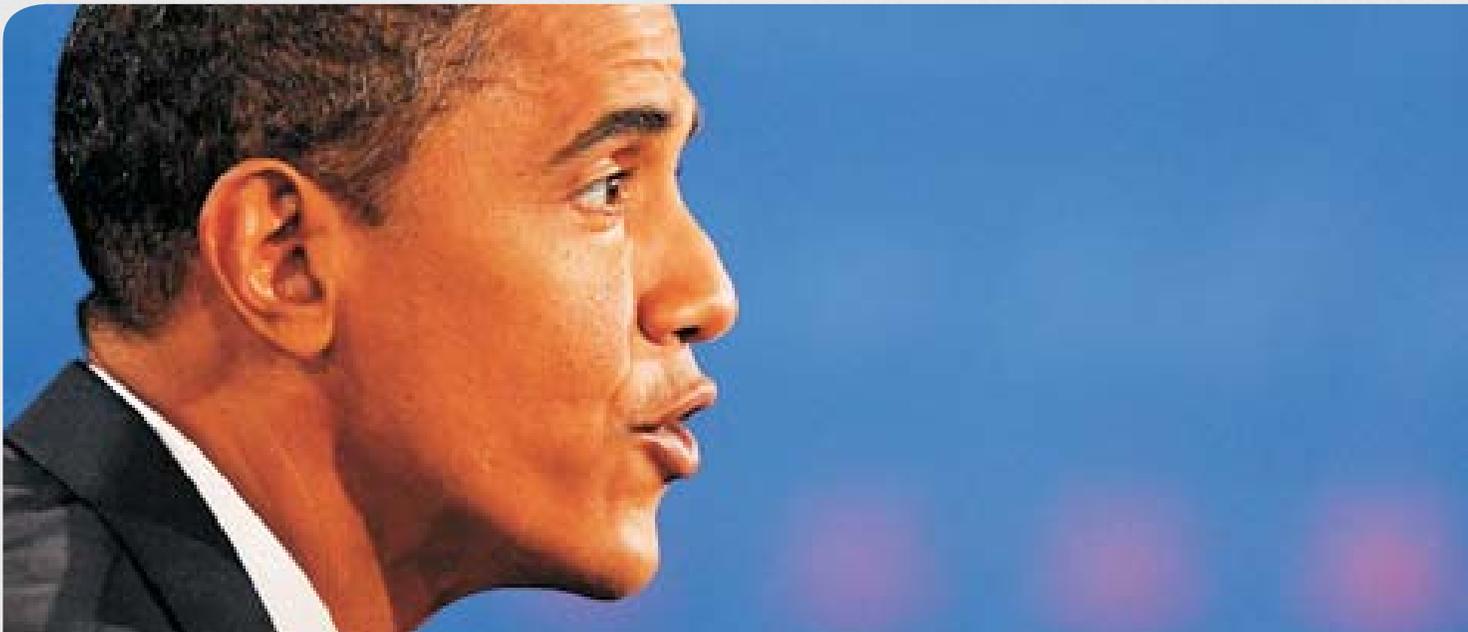




An open letter to President-elect Obama

Win Turkey as a key partner

O. Faruk Loğođlu



When you take your oath of office next January 20, not just the American people, but also the whole world will be greeting you with hope and expectation. Your views, choices and decisions will affect the globe well beyond America's borders and have consequences in the lives and well-being of people everywhere. The international community today longs deeply for justice, security, peace and some semblance of well-being and prosperity. As the leader of the most influential country, you have an unprecedented opportunity to work for a better world. There will be appeals to you from all corners of the world. Our times require an American President who is aware of the strengths of America, but also cognizant of the limits of its power, a leader who is humble and respectful of the assets of other nations. Your success will depend on how well you choose between those

issues where you take the lead and apply America's full weight and those issues that you leave to others to resolve. To succeed in this historic enterprise, Turkey, an ally for more than fifty years, can be one your strategic partners in the very critical regions of Eurasia and the Middle East.

With these thoughts, I call on you from Turkey to share my reflections on Turkish-American relations

Turkey and the United States sustain a key relationship invaluable to both, resting on a foundation of common values and converging national interests. Democracy, the rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms and market economy are among the elements that bond the two nations. In spite of the occasional important differences that occur, the two allies and partners

generally have similar and often harmonious approaches to and understanding of the resolution of various regional and global issues and conflicts. Our relationship has withstood the vicissitudes of time and has amply proven its strength and durability. Our cooperation has worked mostly to the benefit of our nations.

Today humanity faces dire risks and formidable challenges in various fields including terrorism, climate change, food, energy supply and security, weapons of mass destruction, ethnic-sectarian-tribal conflicts, pandemics, natural disasters, poverty, gender related issues and other inequalities. These are matters of common concern to all of us. Turkey is also a pivotal player in the leading major regional conflicts whether in the Caucasus, the Middle East or the Balkans. NATO's evolution, the future of Iraq and Afghanistan, the resurgence of Russia, the Black Sea, state of Euro-Atlantic affairs are other priority items in our mutual agenda. In short, our agendas, our priorities and our needs

in Congress last year and the belated cooperation against PKK terrorists in Iraq provided a breathing space. You now have the opportunity to put our ties on a progressive track.

3. Please keep in mind that the unique and greatest asset of Turkey is its democracy and its secularism. The separation of religion from the affairs of the state and the public domain has been the lifeline of Turkish democracy. The perception that Turkey is of interest because it exemplifies "moderate Islam" is therefore misplaced. Any constructive role that Turkey can play in the context of the "clash of civilizations" has nothing to do with its being a moderate Islamic state-which it is not-or that it typically represents the Islamic world. Turkey's significance lies in its success in having combined democracy and secularism in a predominantly Muslim populated society. If the development and spread of democracy especially in the Muslim world is going to be one of your Administration's goals, it is indispensable that

*On Iraq, understand
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Turkey will continue to join
its efforts with you
if you respect and help protect Iraq's
territorial integrity
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overlap. We can help each other and conversely, we can hurt each other if we fail to utilize the assets of our unique relationship.

This is why I urge you, Mr. President, to pay attention to the following issues to ensure that our partnership remains strong, constructive and mutually beneficial. I realize that on all these points the Turkish side must take the appropriate reciprocating steps.

1. Our relationship is a special one. It is the only formal alliance of the USA with a Muslim country-in NATO. Common values, shared ideals and compatible national interests form its solid foundation. They are both democracies.

2. Today our relations are stable and relatively warm. Recovery in the aftermath of the March 1st (2003) vote in the Turkish Parliament was not easy. The halting of the Armenian resolutions

you understand the workings of Turkish democracy and adjust your attitudes accordingly. The spread of democracy takes time and patience. A low-key approach generally works better, especially if you calibrate it to the unique features of the country in question. The golden rule regarding Turkey in this respect is to not interfere in Turkey's domestic politics and refrain from any action that could create the impression of such interference.

4. Our partnership is asymmetrical. Turkey is a regional power; the US is a global power. Turkish perceptions and assessments of issues and events derive from local references and are much more textured with historical and cultural elements and sensitive to local balances and interests. The US operates on a global scale and at a macro level, making it less attentive to local details. Turkey's foreign policy objectives change little over time whereas

American priorities shift rapidly. When seeking Turkish cooperation, this asymmetry must be kept in mind. Do not forget that because of this asymmetry, the priorities, the immediacy and timing of demands and expectations of the two sides can differ significantly. The realistic setting and matching of priorities are therefore critical in order to reciprocally reap maximum benefits.

5. The Turkish-American relationship is fragile and sensitive in its public psychology dimension. Like Americans, national honor is inviolable for Turks. Inadvertent statements or incidents implying disrespect for national values and symbols should be avoided if our relationship is not to be sidetracked. Take ownership of your ties with Turkey. Take the initiative and make a statement affirming the importance of our ties. This would do much good and provide an auspicious start.

6. Surveys consistently indicate a very unfavorable opinion of the US in Turkey. This underlines the need to implement a broad public diplomacy strategy to win the hearts of the Turkish public. That should be one of the tasks of your Administration.

7. The efforts of the Armenian and other anti-Turkish lobbies to take our relationship hostage should be rendered harmless. You need to convince the Turkish public that you are being fair and not giving in to the demands of special interest groups, especially when those demands are at least questionable.

8. Two concrete issues regarding Turkey that will be brought to your attention in the early days of your Presidency will be the Armenian resolutions in the Congress and American help in the fight against the PKK that is based in Iraq. They literally constitute the red buttons in the control deck of our relations. Any resolution in the Congress supporting Armenian claims would do substantial, if not irreparable damage to your standing in Turkey and upset the entire chemistry of our relationship. Moreover, it would not help resolve the problem and reverse the positive trends now in the making between Turkey and Armenia. Instead, you should encourage the recent positive trends between the two neighboring states in the direction of dialogue and conciliation.

9. Similarly, the decision of the Bush administration to work with Turkey against the PKK terrorists operating from their safe havens in Iraq is of critical significance for the Turkish people. You should ensure that the Turkish-American cooperation in that sphere continues without interruption.

10. Proper maintenance of our relationship might also require a refurbishing of the various bilateral consultation mechanisms and joint commissions that are in place. These different bodies have generally fallen short of expectations. The only exception is the mechanisms between the two militaries that have met

regularly and performed efficiently. You might ask for a review of the current situation in order to ascertain what steps are necessary to put Turkish-American relations on a sounder footing. A step that should surely be taken would be to widen the spectrum of bilateral official contacts. At present, our contacts are limited to heads of state or government, foreign ministers and to ministers in charge of the treasury and trade. We need to expand the network of our contacts to cover other government departments to help diversify our relationship.

11. There has been an important shift in the fulcrum of our ties because of changes in the international environment in the last several decades. The shift has diminished the relative weight of the military-defense component of our relationship and increased the importance of energy-related issues and of such “soft power” elements such as culture, religion and civilization.

Maintaining a proper balance and mix among the different components is probably necessary for the optimal performance of our partnership. This should enhance the level of “smart” power accruing from our ties.

12. Energy is an all-important variable in the equation of international relations today. Even as you try to reduce the dependence of your country on foreign oil and gas, you will still need supplies from abroad for a

long time to come. Turkey is poised to become a major hub of oil and gas from the Caspian and Central Asian regions as well as from the Middle East, including Iran. Turkey is a safe, reliable, secure and an economically and environmentally acceptable hub for the distribution and transmission of energy supplies. This will counter-balance Russian dominance in this domain and provide alternative outlets to the producer nations. The BTC pipeline became a reality because of strong American official support. Now is the time to encourage and motivate both governments and oil companies to build additional oil and gas pipelines terminating in or transiting through Turkey. In short, help and promote Turkey to become an energy hub and corridor on a world scale.

13. One final note about our bilateral relationship concerns economic ties. The political, strategic, defense and cultural components of our relationship are strong and durable. However, the economic dimension requires more effort as the amount of our trade is small and the level of American investments in Turkey is rather low. A substantial economic stake will improve the immunity of our relationship to tensions and crises we may face in other domains. Make the expansion of our economic-commercial-investment ties a priority. Diversification of our ties in the fields of culture, education and science as well as increasing

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contacts between our civil society organizations are also needed to enhance the overall value of our relationship.

14. Turkey has recently intensified its efforts towards the resolution of the many conflicts in its region. Its unique capabilities (history, culture, knowledge, body language...) are among the factors that enable Turkey to play a useful and facilitating role in the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans. However, Turkey's activity and efforts alone will not be enough to bring these complicated conflicts to resolution. We need to connect Turkish energies to the capacities of the US and the EU. Such synergizing should enhance the overall effectiveness of the Euro-Atlantic community.

15. One conflict, which ought to be your top priority, is the Arab-Israeli dispute. This is an area where Turkey and the US could act effectively together. Turkey's engagement of Syria is important and makes Syria a willing partner in the Middle East peace process. It also makes Syria less dependent on Iran. On the other hand, a critical pitfall for you to avoid in the Middle East is the division of the countries in the region along a sectarian axis.

Pitting Sunnis against the Shiites is the ultimate recipe for disaster.

16. Turkey is a NATO member. It seeks membership in the EU. Past administrations have supported Turkey's quest for EU

accession. The American support has been very helpful and should be continued. The Euro-Atlantic community would be stronger with Turkey in the EU and enhance its effectiveness in coping with the different regional and transnational challenges we are facing.

17. There is currently a window of opportunity for the settlement of the long-standing problem of Cyprus. Negotiations are in progress between the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots. The US has always taken a keen interest in the problem and been in a position to make a concrete contribution to its resolution. Many feel this may be the last chance for a long time to come to find a just solution that will protect the interests of the two sides in the Island as well as the interests of Turkey as a guarantor power. If you take action in favor of a negotiated settlement, the chances of success in Cyprus will improve vastly. Another reason why you should not ignore this issue is the potential it carries for an armed conflict between Turkey and the Greek Cypriots (and possibly Greece) over oil exploration rights in the eastern Mediterranean.

18. A related challenge is the set of Aegean disputes between Turkey and Greece. This is a relatively quiet front at present despite occasional incidents that occur in the sea and in the air. Nonetheless, experience tells us that any small incident in the

Aegean could rapidly escalate into a major confrontation between the two NATO allies. The US has tried to help before. Your Administration might find itself in the midst of an explosive situation in the Aegean. It would therefore be prudent for you to familiarize yourself with this file.

19. On Iraq, understand that no policy, American or otherwise, can succeed without the support of its neighbors. Turkey will continue to join its efforts with you if you respect and help protect Iraq's territorial integrity and national unity. The Kirkuk issue is still Iraq's Gordian knot and must be resolved in a manner consistent with the nation's unity and territorial integrity and the interests of all the Iraqis (Arabs, Kurds, Turcomans and all the other ethnic and religious minorities).

20. The US ought not to oppose Turkey's engagement of Iran because connecting Iran to the West helps Iran's reintegration

into the international community and creates stakes for Iran to maintain a responsible stance in regional and world affairs. It is also important to realize that there is no substitute for direct dialogue between the US and Iran. You should challenge Iran to engage first.

Russian resurgence is substantially altering global politics. The Caucasus region is experiencing new strains. Some fear the beginning of a new Cold

War. We are facing a new, rather unpredictable situation. One consequence of all this has been the introduction of the Black Sea and the related matter of the Montreux Convention to the international agenda. This is an area where you must act with caution and sophistication. The Montreux Convention has proven its worth and it works. You must closely coordinate your aims and actions with Turkey and not push Turkey into a corner in this respect.

22. Turkey's relations with Russia are substantial in terms of trade, investments, tourism and in the field of energy. Our national interest dictates that we maintain positive relations with Russia. As you deal with Russia, keeping Turkey's special position in mind would be helpful.

23. Finally, Mr. President, I would urge you to visit my country at your earliest opportunity. This should win you much sympathy here and energize our bilateral relations.

I believe Turkey is a pivotal power in its geopolitical space, a strategic partner of the US and a key member of the Euro-Atlantic community. A statesman once said, "America is a nation that seeks its golden age in the future". The same is true for Turkey. Let us therefore join our visions and make the world a better, safer place.

O. Faruk Loğoğlu is former Ambassador of Turkey to the USA.



"A Bridge too Far"

Turkish-American Cooperation in the Black Sea and the Transcaucasus

Mehmet Ali Tuğtan



While most students of international relations viewed the recent developments in the Transcaucasus and the Black Sea as a reversal of Western designs, one should not be over-pessimistic. Further integration of the region to the global economic system and to western political and military structures has not come to a full stop. To understand why this is so, and to appreciate the effects this would have on Turkish-American relations and their cooperation, one first has to look at the emergence of the problem and outline the basic positions of the actors.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, new regions hitherto concealed within the vast Soviet Empire entered the world stage: Central Asia, the Black Sea and the Transcaucasus regions consisted of fragile states rich in oil and natural gas resources. They represented a crucial geo-strategic salient between Russia, Middle East, China and India. This salient was important both as a gateway between the Far East and the West and as a source of natural gas and oil. However, it was also a source of potential trouble with fragile state structures, inter-border disputes, ethnic strife, dysfunctional post-Soviet economies and radical Islamic elements.

The US had four aims for these regions: domination of energy sources and routes; preventing a Russian resurgence; keeping Chinese meddling and Iranian influence in check; and integration of the regional states into the international system under US tutelage. All three aims coincided with Turkey's interests, and the US expected Turkish support for their realization. Thus, the US encouraged Turkey to engage with 'the Turkic world from the Great Wall of China to the Adriatic

Sea'. For Turkey, the emerging Turkic world presented an opportunity to diversify her relations, increase her international significance as a bridge between east and west, and form an economic and military community to

support her national aims. Indeed, Turkey recognized the independence of these countries and immediately established diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level. She organized regular summits of the Turkic World to establish closer political and economic cooperation. However, her economic, political and military powers were insufficient to forge such a community in the face of Russian influence and Iranian rivalry. Thus, acting as a proxy for the US designs about the region provided Turkey with US support in investment, diplomatic initiative and economic leverage. The American backing proved vital, especially for the completion of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline project, which constituted the core of the Turkish bid for becoming an alternative energy route to Russia.

However the interests of Turkey and the US were not always identical. While Turkey supported Azerbaijan in the Azeri-Armenian disputes the US pursued a more pro-Armenian policy. This was a natural result of the conflict between Turkey's historical and current disputes with Armenia on the one hand, and the overall American plan of integrating Armenia with the West, on the other. In the early 1990s, there were two outstanding problems between Turkey and Armenia. The first related to history: Armenia wanted Turkey to recognize the events of 1915 as genocide and in its declaration of independence, referred to Eastern Anatolia as 'Western Armenia'. This infuriated the Turkish side that demanded that genocide claims be discussed



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by historians, and that Armenia explicitly recognize the current inter-state borders. The second question emanated from the Armenian occupation of Azeri territory in Nagorno-Karabakh as well as the surrounding districts bordering Armenia. This occupation turned more than 1.5 million Azeri into refugees. In retaliation, Turkey closed her borders with Armenia until the dispute was settled. Hostile relations between the two countries were contrary to US designs of integration, since Armenia's only window to the west is Turkey. Thus, the US government has been pressuring Turkey to open the border

and improve her relations with Armenia. Turkey, however, remained adamant.

Another conflict of interest between Turkey and the US in the 1990s arose during the implementation of the CFE treaty. The US requested Turkey to tolerate Russian demands for modification, which would allow a substantial Russian military build-up in the Caucasus. Actually, the core of the Turkish-US discord arose from their view of Russia in general. During the first half of the 1990s, Russia was a rival for Turkey in the Black Sea, Transcaucasus and Central Asia. For the US however,



The economies of the countries that occupy the critical bottleneck on the east-west axis of trade and energy transportation, namely Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Armenia are largely dependent on Russia.

toleration of Russian resurgence in the Near Abroad after 1993 was a price to be paid in order to keep Russia within the fold and secure her acquiescence to NATO enlargement in Central and Eastern Europe. In time, Turkey had to recognize and accommodate Russian interests and moderate her ambitions in line with her limited resources. Moderation of Turkish ambitions was also the result of Ankara's realization that the countries of the region did not wish to exchange one big brother (Russia) with another (Turkey). Thus, in the latter part of the 1990s, Turkey focused on more realistic projects based on mutual gain. The BTC pipeline remained as the ultimate strategic objective, for which the US committed herself after eliminating alternative routes. The more problematic Russian approval for the project came only after a *quid pro quo* that created the Blue Stream pipeline. That pipeline carried Russian natural gas through the Black Sea into Turkey, thereby increasing her energy dependency to Russia.

With the successful conclusion of the BTC deal at the turn of the millennium, Turkey focused on another great prize, the EU-led Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) project. The transit freight between Europe and China consists of some 6 to 7 million containers a year, representing a trade volume of \$600 billion. Though the initial plans for TRACECA had by-passed Turkey through a sea-line between Georgia and Bulgaria, this was clearly impractical, since Turkey had a railway line parallel to the sea-route. Moreover, during the second half of the 1990s Turkey had become the primary naval power in the Black Sea, and had also forged a platform of cooperation between regional actors with the founding of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Thus, by 2002, Turkey joined the

TRACECA project. With the changes to the original plan proposed by Turkey, the Baku-Tblisi-Kars-Istanbul railway line is now recognized as one of the primary land routes of transportation, along with the Turkish Black Sea coast highway under construction.

Meanwhile, the US had completed the integration of Central and Eastern Europe to the Western alliance system, and turned her attention to the Black Sea region. A series of revolutions inspired by the activities of Western, and frequently American, pro-democracy NGO's (and apparently to official American delight) changed the governments in Serbia, Ukraine and Georgia, shifting the route of these countries decidedly away from the Russian orbit. These developments were compounded by the NATO and EU memberships of Romania and Bulgaria by 2007.

The first half of the millennium decade, particularly between 9/11 and the Iraq war in 2003 was a period of high hopes for Turkey-US relations. After 9/11, Washington received Turkey's full support in its fight against global terrorism and expected that Ankara would unquestioningly follow the US lead even in an affair that was as irksome for Turkey as the war against Iraq. However, the breakdown of the partnership between the two countries over the Iraq war brought in a period of tense relations. In March 2003, Turkish Parliament refused to ratify a government motion that would allow US troops basing and passage rights en route to Iraq. The refusal of the parliament to approve the government motion resulted not only in changes to the US military plans but also to her post-conflict arrangements. Whereas the original plan assumed Turkey to be the prime ally in the Northern Front, the Turkish rejection led the Americans

to seek the support and cooperation of northern Iraqi Kurds. As a result, the road to Kurdish autonomy and quasi-independence was opened. After the invasion, the US proceeded to enhance the Kurdish authority in Northern Iraq and bar Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) from cross-border operations into the region. On 4 July 2003, US troops arrested the members of the Turkish Special Forces liaison team in the northern Iraqi town of Suleymaniya; hooded and kept them under custody for three days, thereby causing an outrage on the Turkish side.

From 2003 onwards, the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) attacks against Turkish targets in the region increased as well. Throughout the 1990's, the PKK had launched attacks to targets inside Turkey from bases in northern Iraq, and TAF had launched cross-border attacks against these camps. After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the US had assured Turkey that the new Iraqi government would diffuse terrorism inside Iraq and warned her not to engage in cross-border operations. However, the PKK attacks continued and escalated. In the mean time, the US gradually accepted a federal solution for post-Saddam Iraq. This brought about the possibility of a quasi-independent Kurdish state, which Ankara feared would stir similar aspirations among Turkey's own Kurdish population.

While the developments related to Iraq made headlines in Turkish-American relations, a second and less publicized tension in bilateral relations emanated from US pressure on Turkey for more naval access to the Black Sea. For the Americans, this was a natural extension of their plan to integrate the region with western security structures. For Turkey, however, integration of the region and the preservation of the Montreux Regime that governs the passage through the Turkish Straits were entirely different matters. The latter not only touched upon questions of Turkish sovereignty, but also carried the potential of explosive Russian reaction at a time when Turkish-Russian relations on both economic and political fields were rapidly improving. Thus, Turkey cooperated with Russia to preserve the Montreux Regime against US demands -an irony of history given the fact that it was the Soviet demands on the revision of Montreux Treaty back in 1946 that led Turkey towards the Western Alliance.

As the occupation of Iraq turned into the worst military quagmire for the US since the Vietnam War, both Ankara and Washington came to an understanding based on mutual need. By the end of 2007, the US supported the Turkish position on the status of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk (to the great disappointment of the regional Kurdish authority) and postponed a referendum that would determine the city's future status. In January 2008, after a meeting between Turkish PM Tayyip Erdoğan and US President G. W. Bush in the White House, the US started to provide Turkey with long-awaited actionable

intelligence' as part of her cooperation against PKK terrorism. Using this intelligence and the tacit US approval, TAF launched its first cross-border operation against PKK camps in Northern Iraq since 2003. In the spring of 2008, the US administration succeeded in blocking a resolution on Armenian genocide claims in Congress. In a meeting with congressional leaders, the Secretary of State Rice clearly expressed the negative consequences of alienating Turkey at a time when her logistical support was crucial to maintain the safety of US troops in Iraq.

It was in this context of revitalizing Turkish-American relations that the Russo-Georgian War erupted in August 2008. Throughout August and September, Turkey initiated a series of diplomatic moves to dampen the tensions in the Transcaucasus. The Turkish PM Erdoğan spoke with both his Russian and Georgian counterparts as well as the President of Azerbaijan and offered the creation of a Caucasus Cooperation and Stability Platform. Turkey acted in accord with the west in countering the Russian recognition of the breakaway regions of Southern Ossetia and Abkhazia, but also kept channels of dialogue with Russia open. Indeed, Turkey's close economic relations with Russia, combined with her dependency on Russian natural gas necessitated a balanced approach to the dispute.

In a further move towards reconciliation, Turkish President Abdullah Gül visited Armenia on 6 September 2008-ostensibly to watch a football game between the national teams of the two countries. Out of this historical visit came a proposal for a Turkish-Azeri-Armenian summit during the UN General Assembly Meeting at the end of September. On 17 September, the Armenian Minister of Energy and Natural Resources announced that his country would start delivering electricity to Turkey starting in 2009. Two days later, Turkey reciprocated by increasing the volume of air traffic through her airspace from Armenia. When the Turkish Foreign Minister Babacan and US Secretary of State Rice met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly on 22 September, Rice described Turkey as a "terrific ally".

The importance of Turkey as an ally of the US in the Black Sea and Transcaucasus is recognized by both Ankara and Washington, despite severe tensions after the failure of March 2003 government motion. The real problems that effect Turkish-American cooperation in the region though are deeper, structural. To understand the real impediments that limit this cooperation, one should look at the economic, demographic, military and cultural elements.

Economically, one can fairly say that while the Black Sea, Transcaucasus and Central Asia host enormous riches of fossil fuel and other minerals, they lack the infrastructure, human and financial capital and political stability to attract large amounts of foreign investment (given the current global

economic crisis, the bar for attracting the limited available capital goes even higher). The fact is that the average income per capita in the BSEC countries is just above \$2000. The total share of these countries in global foreign direct investment flows is around 5%. The economies of the countries that occupy the critical bottleneck on the east-west axis of trade and energy transportation, namely Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Armenia are largely dependent on Russia. This is a structural legacy of the Soviet industrialization where central planning had carefully dispersed factors of production among different republics that made up the Soviet Union. Given that Russia does not wish to relinquish her indispensable position as the east-west energy route, it is only natural that she uses this considerable leverage upon these countries. The western designs of economic integration are very sensitive to political and military disturbances. In the course of the Russo-Georgian war, all pipelines traversing the Georgian territory were shut down at one time or another. As a result, on August 25, the Shana News Agency reported that Azerbaijan had delivered her first oil cargo to the National Iranian Oil Terminals Company for transit purposes.

Demographically, the countries of the region are heterogeneous, because historically they are situated on a transit route of wandering tribes. This historical fact is further complicated by the Soviet era demographic policies, particularly the deportations and border shifts of Stalin. As a result, most of these countries host large Russian or pro-Russian minorities. Russia identifies their protection against their host states as one of her primary missions and uses this excuse to intervene in the domestic affairs of these countries (as demonstrated in her recent incursion into Georgia).

Militarily, the only effective way of integrating the Black Sea and Transcaucasus into the West is further expansion of NATO to include Georgia and the Ukraine, followed by Armenia and Azerbaijan. In a recent statement, German Chancellor Angela Merkel clearly expressed her opposition to even offering candidate status to Ukraine and Georgia. Given the heavy oil and natural gas dependency of her country to Russia, this was more or less to be expected. Even if such status is accorded to these countries, NATO is severely overstretched because of Afghanistan, and hence in no position to field substantial forces for the protection of these countries from a Russian incursion. Russia, for her part, has been using her vast reserves of petrodollars in the last decade to flex her military muscle and revitalize her status as a great power or at least as a power to be reckoned with. In line with the Near Abroad Doctrine, she recognizes the Black Sea and Transcaucasus regions as part of her zone of influence and intends to keep them that way.

In the case of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the prospects of

NATO membership are even more remote: the two countries are deadlocked in a territorial dispute as Armenia continues to occupy Azeri land. Though the relationship shows signs of improvement, Armenia still raises the genocide claim against Turkey and is considered by Ankara to be ambivalent about the 1921 Treaty of Kars, which had created the current interstate border between the two countries. The Armenian borders and airspace are protected by Russian forces and Russia continues to maintain military bases in Armenia. Coupled with the country's complete economic dependence on Russia, it is highly unlikely for the government in Yerevan to take radical steps towards the resolution of her disputes with either Azerbaijan or Turkey without Russian approval. In the absence of a permanent settlement of their border disputes, neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan can be offered NATO membership, though Baku has a much closer relationship with Turkey and the US.

Finally, one should also take into account the human factor, which consists of socio-cultural and perceptual elements. Any attempt at large-scale economic or political transformation cannot have far-reaching effects without accompanying socio-cultural transformations. The societies of the Black Sea, Caucasus and Central Asia have little experience of democracy. Their political landscape is the function of mostly patriarchal, authoritarian and/or tribal social orders. The commitment, if any, of their political elites to notions of democracy, pluralism and human rights is largely instrumental. Their historical experience under Russian imperialism makes them anxious about questions of sovereignty. As a result of the American debacle in Iraq, most of the Muslim peoples of the region view the West as hostile. The regional intelligentsia recognizes a discrepancy of western attitudes when it comes to issues of self-determination and respect for borders. They attribute this discrepancy to crude calculations of power-politics, pretty much akin to the Russian ones. To rephrase President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, their eagerness to get rid of Russian domination does not imply an eagerness to submit to western domination.

The lesson to be drawn from the recent Russo-Georgian war can be stated as follows: over-ambition and disregard for material and human factors on the ground will create only more failures, and lead to further loss of influence and credibility. However, the integration of the Black Sea and Transcaucasus can still move forward through prudent and realist policies. To elaborate on this argument and explain how it relates to Turkish-American cooperation in the region, one should look at cases in point.

Militarily, any scheme that disregards the current drain on both American and NATO resources in the face of growing Russian military power is doomed to fail. Thus, insisting on



Strategically, Turkish and American interests in the region are largely convergent, and through her improving relations with the region, Turkey has considerable leverage that can be used in cooperation with the US.

Georgian and Ukrainian membership without substantial changes in the correlation of forces would not be a prudent course of action. More generally, one has to acknowledge the Russian prerogative until such time as either: a) the west has the means to back up her security guarantees, or b) Russia herself becomes an integral part of the western alliance network. Until such time, expanding NATO is not an option. However, Turkey and US can still continue training and supplying the Georgian and Azeri armies as they have done throughout the 1990s. If Ukraine tries to expel the Russian Black Sea Fleet

in Sevastopol, or if the US tries to inflict changes in the Montreux Regime, the Russians would react militarily. But Turkish naval primacy in the Black Sea can still be used for improving the safety of sea routes that by-pass the Russian ports and land routes.

Economically, one has to take the current socio-economic situation in the region as given and try to improve on that situation rather than present these countries with a grand blueprint of what they should become. The post-Soviet economies in the Black Sea, Transcaucasus and Central Asia regions will not



morph into functioning market economies overnight, but that does not mean foreign investment should shy away from opportunities as they present themselves. Each investment should be assessed in its own terms and context, and not as a part of a grandiose plan of conversion. That conversion has to come about gradually and organically. The TRACECA approach of piecemeal improvement in transportation and customs procedures is a good example: In 13 May 1996, the heads of state of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia signed a cooperation treaty in Sarakhs, Turkmenistan. The treaty aimed to improve railroad transportation and regulation of transit trade. It improved transportation safety, accelerated customs procedures and decreased customs and other official fees by 50%. By 1997, the volume of trade between these countries had increased by 250%. In itself, this did not transform the Georgian, Azeri, Uzbek or Turkmen economies, but it was a job well done. This example should inspire the future attempts of economic integration and both Turkey and the US should work for more of this kind of work. The Russians may use military force if NATO grants membership to Georgia, but they can't do that because the west is improving the country's customs procedure and transportation infrastructure.

Finally, in terms of the human factor, one cannot assume that the peoples of the region will simply forgo their convictions, cultural values or prevailing understanding of what is right and wrong. However, they are still willing to teach their children English, engage in academic and cultural exchange programs, or receive scholarships for their students,

scholars and officials. Every bit of transnational interaction helps: last year, a Turkish soap opera series was dubbed in Syrian Arabic dialect and broadcast in the Middle East. The result was a 100% increase in the number of Arab tourists visiting Turkey, and a very lively debate about the place of women in the Arab society.

Ultimately, the western designs for the Black Sea and Transcaucasus did not fail, but in many crucial respects, they simply cannot be propelled any further under present circumstances. Yet, progress is possible in those areas where material and human factors permit. In terms of Turkey-US cooperation, this means that prudence and realism on both sides (but especially on the American side) would enable the parties to construct new win-win games-not only for themselves but also for the regional actors concerned. The US cannot continue to act as if Russia is still governed by Boris Yeltsin, or as if she has sufficient military power to utterly disregard Russian objections. Strategically, Turkish and American interests in the region are largely convergent, and through her improving relations with the region, Turkey has considerable leverage that can be used in cooperation with the US. But Turkey is also limited by her historical and current disputes with Armenia, and her growing economic inter-dependence with Russia. Thus, Turkey will remain a significant ally of the west in the region, provided that the US does not act with the kind of imprudence that led her to the occupation of Iraq.

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Rethinking Cyprus

Hugh Pope

While Turkey has been distracted by the political struggle in Ankara, chances have been quietly rising for a settlement in Cyprus. The time has now come for business leaders and opinion-makers to start making sure that none of the governments involved miss this extraordinary opportunity. The situation is revolutionary: an end to the Cyprus dispute would cut Cypriots and Turks free from a burden that has held them back for five decades; create new opportunities for prosperity for all in the eastern Mediterranean; and do more than almost anything else to help relaunch Turkey's long struggle for a place in the European Union.

One of the oldest excuses for Turkish inaction - that the Greek Cypriots are not interested in a settlement - is no longer valid, if it ever was. Time, prosperity, international experience and EU membership have changed the Greek Cypriots at least as much as Turkey itself has changed in recent decades. The lack of communication between these two major parties to the Cyprus situation, and the abiding strength of old prejudices about the 'fanatical Greek' and the 'barbarous Turk', is blinding both to the fact that the current talks are the best chance yet for a settlement. It is also a chance which, if missed, is highly unlikely to return.

Some cynicism is perhaps understandable. Many initiatives have failed to stop the deepening divisions of Cyprus since independence from Britain in 1960. The low points are well known: the Greek Cypriot actions that helped drive the Turkish

Cypriot community out of government and into ethnic ghettos in 1963-64; the coup engineered on Cyprus by the junta in Athens to seize the island for Greece in 1974; and the Turkish military intervention a few days later, which reversed the coup, but ended in the indefinite Turkish occupation of 37 per cent of the island.

Peace plans have come and gone, burning the fingers of many a UN Secretary-General. There have been High-Level Agreements, an Interim Agreement, the Gobbli Initiative, the Proximity Talks, the Draft Framework Agreement, the First and Second Sets of Ideas, and finally the Annan Plan. When one side was ready, the other was not. Other delays were caused by elections, military coups in Turkey and Greece and the Cold War. A resolution of the conflict still intimately concerns five other parties: Turkey, Greece, the UK, the EU and the UN. The vital final approval of the UN Security Council of any deal means that Russia has been and will remain a player.

Another reason that nothing moved for so long was the sense of uniqueness in local bitterness. Greek Cypriots failed to appreciate the great wounds felt by Turkish Cypriots from the 1963-74 period, when 400 Turkish Cypriots were killed or went missing. Likewise, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots failed to appreciate the disaster of the Turkish invasion in 1974 for the Greek Cypriots, in which 3,400 Greek Cypriots were killed or disappeared. For decades until 2003, an abiding mistrust propelled veteran leader Rauf Denktaş to keep his focus tightly on achieving



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a two-state solution: as he told US Under Secretary of State George Ball in 1985, "the person that will make me sign an agreement on Cyprus is not yet born." Denktas believed, probably correctly, that the Greek Cypriot side would never meet his minimum demands for sovereignty and self-government. The Greek Cypriot side, meanwhile, kept hoping that international acceptance of its claim to legitimacy could be a lever to achieve its dream of removing Turkish troops and recovering all lost property.

In the background, however, another dynamic was building momentum: the advancing borders of the European Union. When Greece joined the European bloc in 1981, it successfully began to push the cause of its ethnic kin in Cyprus. In return for allowing Turkey to advance to a partial Customs Union with the EU in 1995, Greece secured an advantageous place in the queue for the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus - in reality, an all-Greek Cypriot state. The last of the peace plans, the Annan Plan, was the UN, EU and international community's best effort at bringing in the Greek and Turkish Cypriots into the EU together.

However, in dramatic turnabouts in 2003, the pressure of the Annan Plan brought down both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders. First to go was Glafkos Clerides, a moderate who underestimated the fallout from the fact that no Greek Cypriot leader, including himself, had ever fully explained to his public opinion that a compromise settlement would mean

giving up long-cherished Greek Cypriot dreams of full restitution of all that was lost in the Turkish invasion of 1974. Next out was Rauf Denktas, who had underestimated the longing of Turkish Cypriots to join the EU, and their support for Turkey's new commitment to support its convergence with the EU with a pledge to keep "one step ahead" in Cyprus peace-making.

Clerides' successor in 2003 was hardline nationalist Tassos Papadopoulos. He did much to undermine the Annan Plan at the negotiating table, and finally turned publicly against it just before the two communities went to a referendum. He vowed that having "received a state", he would not "hand over a community." A few brave voices in Greek Cypriot civil society who campaigned for the settlement faced harassment, court cases and vilification in the media as hirelings of the U.S. Their cars were followed and their phones tapped. "The 'yes' campaign had just one month to make its case," one activist said. "We also underestimated the rejectionist camp's resources and propaganda machine. The 'no' campaign won because fear was their weapon, fear of the unknown after any solution."

Another problem was that the Greek Cypriots knew that they would be accepted into the EU whether they voted yes or no. This situation had its roots in the mid-1990s. The EU powers, irritated by the immobility of the problem, decided to change their old policy to avoid bringing a divided island into the EU. They believed this policy only handed a veto power to Denktas and his Turkish nationalist supporters. Instead, they decided to

accept the Greek position that the Greek Cypriots' Republic of Cyprus should be made a candidate, in the hope that this would put pressure on the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey to compromise as membership became imminent. This strategy worked -65 per cent of Turkish Cypriots voted for the plan- but too late to make a difference to the Greek Cypriots.

Feeling that they had nothing to lose, and hearing their leader denounce the Annan Plan each day, the Greek Cypriots rejected the plan with 76 per cent of the vote. The Turkish and Turkish Cypriot side then watched with disbelief as the Greek Cypriots not only entered the EU, but also managed to minimize or eliminate many of the promises made by the EU to reward the Turkish Cypriots for their 'yes' vote. This has already had negative results in spoiling the EU-Turkey relationship. If the current round of talks fails, the consequences are likely to be even worse for the EU, as will be shown below.

Nevertheless, the Greek Cypriot hardliners had only won a tactical victory. Papadopoulos's underlying idea was that Greek Cypriots only had to wait, and the offer of well-paid work, free hospital treatment, EU membership and passports would persuade the majority of Turkish Cypriots to join Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus as individuals. The next four years proved that the carrot of such temptations, along with



won 66.8 per cent of the vote with promises of a more compromising line with the Turkish Cypriots.

The ultimate winner in the second round, AKEL leader Demetris Christofias, quickly started to reverse the previous government's hardline approach in both style and substance. The new administration admitted Greek Cypriot errors since the 1960s; accepted that 50,000 immigrants from Turkey would stay on the island; addressed Greek Cypriots on television to prepare for the compromises of a solution, like a rotating presidency; warned that not all Greek Cypriots will be able to return to their old homes; sent a senior official and a presidential wreath to the funeral of a recently exhumed Turkish Cypriot killed in the 1960s; accepted a negotiated settlement to eight court cases trying to block European Commission aid programs in the north; and invited Turkish journalists to visit the south, even though they had entered the island from the Turkish Cypriot side. All these were previously taboo subjects or actions.

There are other sides of broader Greek Cypriot change. Although continuing a long-standing alliance with Papadopoulos's party DIKO, the Christofias government gave Cabinet posts only to coalition partners with weak links to the old hard line regime. The main opposition party, DISY, the runner-up in the presidential election, has repeatedly and strongly supported Christofias's efforts to reach a settlement. In

September, he braved stinging opposition criticism to start modernizing Greek Cypriot schoolbooks, virtually unchanged since 1950. The new text will aim to build mutual respect, to stress shared values, to talk about the suffering of Turkish Cypriots as well as that of the Greek Cypriots, and to fulfil what one Christofias party spokesman said was "an obligation towards the new generation to give them the truth."

For sure, Christofias and his AKEL party have given contradictory signals in the past. The party helped defeat peace plans in 1978 and most recently in 2002-2004. In 2004, Christofias presided over a messy political deal that left him a partner in Papadopoulos's ruling coalition and campaigning against the Annan Plan (the AKEL slogan was an awkward "'no' to cement the 'yes'", referring to a future Cyprus compromise). As recently as June 2008, Greek Cypriot officials blocked the opening of the energy chapter in Ankara's negotiations to join the EU, contradicting the new government's claim to support Turkey's EU membership. Christofias has also shown reluctance to reverse the previous government's policies and allow visiting ministers from Europe

the stick of uncompromising policies rejecting Turkish Cypriot communal rights, only made the Turkish Cypriot state stronger, richer and more accepted in the world. In short, only compromise with the Turkish Cypriots as a community could win what many Greek Cypriots sought: a Turkish troop withdrawal, compensation for property and long-term security.

That's why the February 2008 Greek Cypriot presidential election produced a major upset -and why it is a mistake to see the 76 per cent rejection of the 2004 referendum as the Greek Cypriots' last word on a settlement. Incumbent Tassos Papadopoulos based his re-election campaign on having blocked the Annan Plan and his promise to say "no" to any attempt to resurrect it, and was defeated. The victors of the first round



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atmosphere was qualitatively different from the opening of the frontline crossings in 2003, when Greek Cypriots focused on visiting lost homes, family villages and religious shrines. In private, Greek Cypriot intellectuals and business people are increasingly worried that time is working against them. Without a comprehensive settlement, they realise, there will be no Turkish troop withdrawal, no recovery of land, no restoration or compensation of properties and no normalisation with Turkey. Greek

Cypriot fears that the Turkish Cypriots might abandon the talks and go it alone with success. Such fears were

to meet the Turkish Cypriot leader in his office in the north, which was, after all, the official residence of the former Turkish Cypriot Vice President according to the system set up for Cypriot independence in 1960.

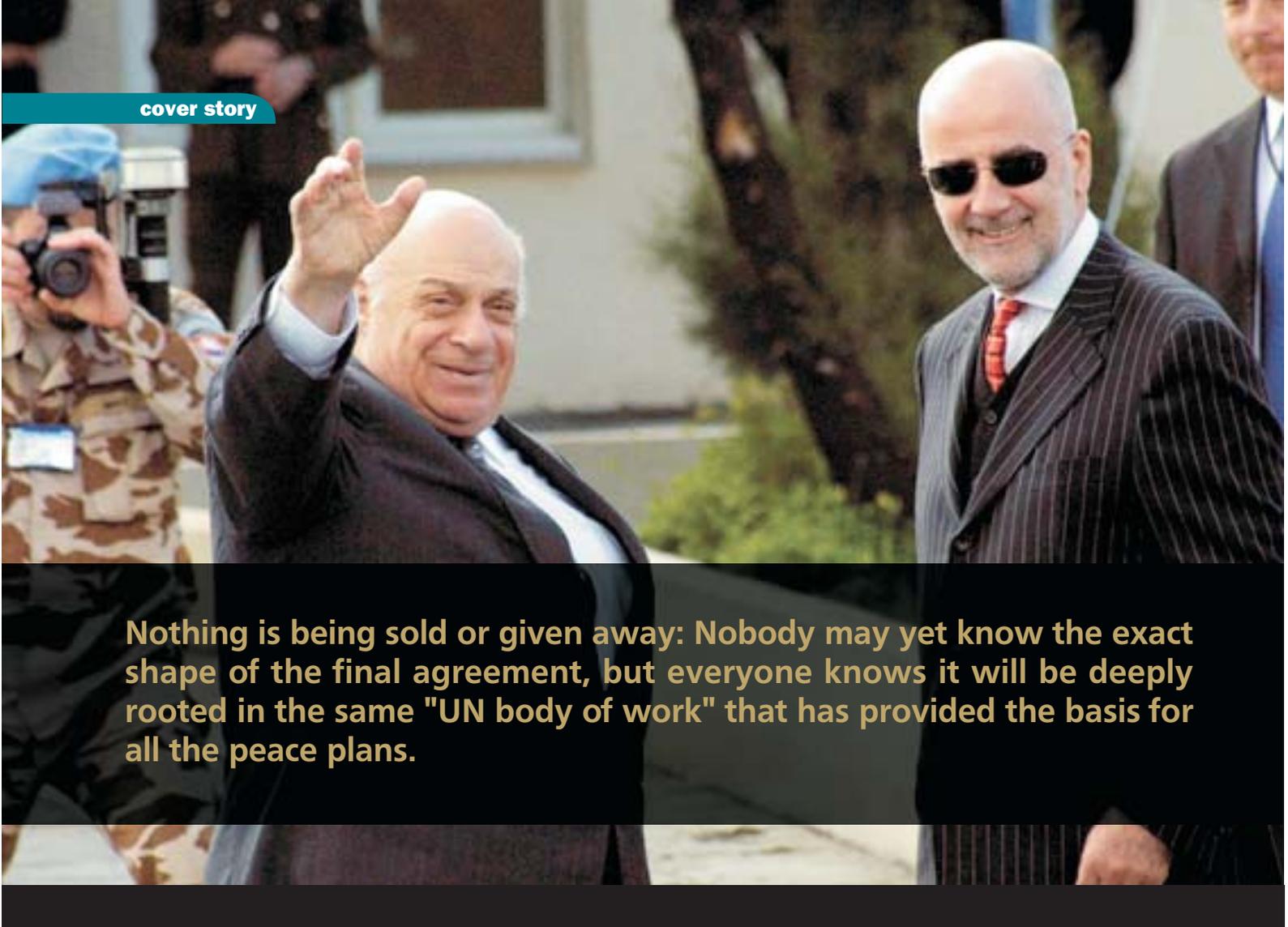
But the Greek Cypriot vote for a president who would seek compromise is the result of a deep strategic change. Until 2004, the 750,000 Greek Cypriots long believed their position was too weak and isolated to commit fully to negotiations on a comprehensive settlement. Despite a joint defence doctrine with Greece and Greek military support, Greek Cypriots felt at a great disadvantage to a far stronger Turkish army and 75 million Turks to the north in Turkey. This is still often expressed in the fear that "even if we reach a deal, Turkey will never implement it". However, full EU membership since 2004 has done much to alleviate their sense of insecurity. The Greek Cypriots have scaled back arms purchases and training exercises. According to Jane's, the defence publication, the Greek Cypriots view the EU as a "cost-effective defence umbrella."

In an April poll, three quarters of Greek Cypriots backed Christofias' pro-solution approach. When the Ledra Street crossing opened, it was ordinary Greek Cypriots who flocked to the Turkish Cypriot side. The optimistic and carefree

increased by significant international recognition for Kosovo's declaration of independence on 17 February 2008. Even worse was the Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008 and Moscow's recognition of the "independence" of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

There are thus many reasons for Christofias to join with Talat to start real work on a settlement. The two men have a long-established dialogue and friendship based on their left-wing parties' common anti-nationalist cause. Throughout the past six months, despite altercations in the media, they have held long private discussions after their official meetings. Talat's commitment to a compromise settlement was already proven in 2004, and now a UN mission to the island has elicited at least a declaration from Christofias that "I want to die with the assurance that new generations will not torture themselves with the Cyprus problem." Turkish Cypriots also remember Christofias's AKEL for supporting the peacemaking efforts of former Greek Cypriot President George Vasiliou, and for many actions that protected ordinary people during the 1955-1974 years of communal violence.

Christofias's and Talat's monthly meetings have built a steady momentum towards a solution. On 3 April, they agreed to re-open Ledra Street, a commercial street in the heart of Nicosia



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closed since the late 1950s. On 18 April, UN-mediated preparatory talks started in six working groups and seven technical committees, involving about 100 leading politicians and activists from both communities. On 20 June, a number of confidence-building measures were announced in public health, crossings by ambulances and road safety. On 23 May, they defined the overall goal of the negotiations in language that showed real compromise: the Greek Cypriots accepted that there would be "two Constituent States" and the Turkish Cypriot side accepted that the new federal state would have a "single international personality." This was underlined on 1 July, when the two leaders agreed "in principle" that there would be one citizenship and sovereignty in this new state. The two leaders started new talks in September.

What does this mean for Turkey? First of all, this progress is a chance to achieve in 2008-2009 the Cypriot settlement that should have happened but was missed by all sides in 2004. Secondly, a successful conclusion of these talks would be a chance to set Turkey's EU convergence process back on track, outflanking Turkey-skeptic leaders like President Sarkozy of France and Chancellor Merkel of Germany. Thirdly, normalization of relations between Turkey and the whole island of Cyprus would offer many opportunities for Turkish business, just like normalization with Greece has done since 1999. There are many

other benefits: the roughly 30,000 Turkish troops on Cyprus can be redeployed for more urgent duties; Turkish foreign policy will win greater respect and freedom of action; Turkish Cypriots will become more prosperous as they gain full rights within the EU; as a community, the Turkish Cypriots will become an asset for Turkey rather than an expensive responsibility; and finally, Turkish Cypriots will be able to express Turkish concerns from the inside of the EU, for instance pushing for the early adoption of Turkish as an EU official language.

As a guarantor power in Cyprus, Turkey will have its word to say on the settlement. As former Chief of Staff Gen. Yasar Büyükanit has said, it will have to agree that the Turkish Cypriots will be safe within a well-constructed agreement. However, Turkey needs to start debating now whether Turkish hardliners are right to say that even if there were no Turkish Cypriots on Cyprus, Turkey would still need a base on the island to secure shipping lanes and threats of Greek encirclement. These hardliners compare Turkey's demand to the rights of far-away Britain, whose two big bases can make Cyprus seem like an aircraft carrier. There are however strong arguments to be made against such positions. While Turkey's military security may be improved by a base on Cyprus, it is a marginal advantage, and possibly a liability, to have an aircraft carrier permanently anchored 70 km off the Turkish coastline. Turkey also needs to ask whether

its best interest is served by old-fashioned hard power, or rather by the greater soft power and prestige that real convergence with the EU gives Turkey in the Middle East and the region. And if Turkey is sincere about pursuing EU membership, the argument about being "encircled" by Greece and Cyprus has no meaning.

The recent political confusion in Ankara is no excuse to miss this opportunity. Public opinion over Cyprus is not the problem some in Turkey pretend that it is: polls show a majority once again support the goal of EU membership. Most Turks now seem to approve of the Annan Plan of 2004, and have internalized the idea that the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots can safely live together within the EU. Despite worries about public opinion and domestic politics, in the past year Turkey implemented a big change in its relationship with Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government and the United States, and may be about to do the same with Armenia. Like Turkey's new success in the Middle East, these policies are not just AKP initiatives, but are the result of years of work by Turkish diplomats, businessmen and civil society organizations.

There are of course some cries of "traitor" going up on both sides. On the Greek Cypriot side, ex-president Papadopoulos is criticizing the compromises of Christofias. Similar criticism of Talat and the AKP is coming from former Turkish Cypriot

indefinitely. The old comfort of an unthreatening status quo is no longer available. Now that the Greek Cypriots are full members of the EU, the stakes and risks are higher. Failure could lead to new insecurity and even military tensions between Cyprus and Turkey. For the Turkish Cypriots, meanwhile it would mean becoming completely dependent on Turkey. And for Turkey, Cyprus would become a worse problem than before: an economic cost, a diplomatic burden, and, above all, the biggest obstacle between the Turks and their ambition for a full place in the European family of nations.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle of all to a Cyprus solution is now inertia. The EU has not yet woken up to the opportunity and risks it faces in Cyprus. On the island, cynicism remains widespread. Polls show that fully 40 per cent of the population has become so used to the status quo that they simply do not believe that a settlement will ever happen. The leaderships,



The old comfort of an unthreatening status quo is no longer available. Failure could lead to new insecurity and even military tensions between Cyprus and Turkey.

President Rauf Denktaş and hardline retired generals in Turkey. But other retired generals privately voice support for a settlement.

After all, nothing is being sold or given away: nobody may yet know the exact shape of the final agreement, but everyone knows it will be deeply rooted in the same "UN body of work" that has provided the basis for all the peace plans. After all, the outlines of a solution in Northern Ireland was known for decades; but when all sides were ready, they agreed to it.

If this year's process breaks down, however, it will likely be the last attempt at a comprehensive settlement for many years. One day, perhaps, the outside world may consider a two-state solution on the island. But nobody is going to be willing to recognize northern Cyprus as a separate state, even after 34 years of division, and all sides should count the costs of waiting

supported by powerful voices from Turkey, Greece and beyond, must begin to tell the story of what a post-settlement Cyprus could look like. There is much to say: normalization with Turkey would allow Cyprus's sagging tourism industry to benefit from an influx of Turkish tourists, Cyprus could become a genuine financial and service hub in the east Mediterranean, Cypriot businesses could begin to invest in Turkey, and Turkish companies would find a rich new market. A major bi-communal survey predicted in February that, based on the huge rise in trade and investment between Greece and Turkey since 1999, a settlement would add a minimum of 10 percentage points to the Cypriot economy within seven years. From being a burden and source of tension, Cyprus, with its low taxes, strategic position and relatively efficient government, would become a confident, cosmopolitan society and booming beacon of prosperity in the eastern Mediterranean. That would be good for all Cypriots, and for Turkey too.

Hugh Pope is the Turkey/Cyprus project director for International Crisis Group, and the author of Turkey Unveiled: a History of Modern Turkey and Sons of the Conquerors: the Rise of the Turkic World.

TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS



beyond football diplomacy

Bülent Aras

In a historic gesture last July, Armenian President Serge Sargsian invited Turkish President Abdullah Gül to attend the World Cup qualifying football match between the national teams of the two countries. This invitation came amid hopes for a breakthrough in relations between Turkey and Armenia. After some hesitation President Gül flew to Armenia to watch the football match as a goodwill gesture on 6 September 2008. Diplomatic history suggests that sports events may help bring détente and improvement in relations between countries. The most famous such case was the ‘ping-pong diplomacy’ that paved the way for the establishment of diplomatic relations between the US and the People’s Republic of China during the Cold War era, following China’s invitation of the US table tennis team to Beijing for a series of exhibition matches in 1971.

Sargsian’s invitation was extended to Gül before the recent conflict in Georgia erupted. The visit itself was regarded as an important step towards normalizing relations. Although it would be an exaggeration to regard the football match meeting as a historical turning point, its symbolic significance for normalizing relations between Armenia and Turkey cannot be underestimated. Interestingly, it is a little known fact and an lively footnote to history that Armenian football teams have for some time been choosing the city of Antalya in the Turkish Riviera as their pre-season training place and have not encountered any difficulties.

Areas of contention

Turkish-Armenian relations are shaped by the wider framework of Turkey’s Caucasian policy and the binding impact of the Armenian Diaspora. In its relations with Yerevan Ankara struggled with the problem of normalization since its recognition of Armenia. Turkey appeared more active in seeking a solution to the problems between the two countries while Armenia has

historically pursued a consistently uncooperative attitude in this problematic relationship. Turkey recognized Armenia earlier than many states, and invited Yerevan to join the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization as a founding member in 1993 despite the fact that Armenia has no shore on the Black Sea. Turkey provided energy to Armenia when it faced serious energy shortages in the 1990s. Ankara also donated one hundred thousand tons of wheat to her neighbor during those years, despite the hostility of Turkish public opinion. Scheduled flights between Yerevan and Istanbul are operational despite the closure of the land borders. Turkey also turns a blind eye to the presence of thousands of illegal Armenian workers in its territory.

In contrast, Armenia repeatedly raises its allegations of genocide in every possible international forum. It aims to corner Turkey with the genocide blame in international circles. The Armenian parliament referred to Turkey’s eastern provinces as “western Armenia” in its declaration of independence dated 23 August 1990. This declaration also calls on the international community to recognize Armenia’s genocide allegations.

One major factor preventing the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia is Turkey’s relations with Azerbaijan. At the end of Armenia’s war with Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabagh, Armenia occupied one fifth of Azerbaijani territory. It still ignores the UN Security Council decisions against the occupation. Ankara has close ties to Baku, and benefits from energy cooperation deals; Azerbaijan thus closely follows developments in the relations between Armenia and Turkey. Azerbaijan is Turkey’s major partner in the region and will continue to be the most important country for Ankara to take into consideration. For its part, the Armenian state considers Turkey and Azerbaijan as serious threats to its national security and territorial integrity. The Armenian administration therefore

pursues a balancing policy through the maintenance of close relations with Russia and Iran. Russian soldiers provide security for Armenian borders, and Russia has military bases in Armenia. Russia is a strategic partner and protector against potential Azerbaijani and Turkish aggression in the eyes of the Armenian administration. Armenia's balancing policy has remained a major tenet of its foreign policy in the post-independence period.

Although Turkey and Armenia do not have diplomatic relations, behind-the-scene diplomacy continues between the two sides. Groups within the two states either approve or oppose these secret talks. When Turkish authorities responded to Iranian offers for mediating between Ankara and Yerevan by acknowledging that "we already talk to Armenia," this hitherto hidden diplomacy was uncovered. In the wake of the Georgia-Russia crisis, moreover, Ankara streamlined a multilateral diplomatic initiative, declaring that it wants Armenia to join its new project: the Caucasian Stability and Cooperation Platform. Turkey's attitude shows that Ankara has an inclusionary approach towards Armenia in the regional context. To date, the Armenian administration has responded positively to the offer, and has indicated that it considers the platform initiative a constructive step to bring stability to the region. This emergence of positive political will on both sides is a significant step in the right direction for rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia. It is therefore necessary to check the motives of both sides to understand the full nature of current developments and evaluate the prospects for the future of these relations.

Turkey's motives for normalization

Turkey has solid and well-grounded foreign policy motives for the normalization of its relations with Armenia. Ankara's new policy to minimize problems with the neighboring countries has been successful with the exception of Armenia. Turkey is engaged in mediation and facilitation activities in the Middle East and follows an active policy in the surrounding regions. The Russian-Georgian conflict, the stalemate in Azerbaijan-Armenian problem, the emergence of a Cold War style West-Russia rivalry and the formation of regional groupings around this binary opposition are immediate sources of concern. These can lead to further armed conflicts and constitute threats to the stability and the security of the region. Furthermore, the problems of ethnic conflicts and separatism have not yet been put fully under control. Under these circumstance Turkish foreign policy makers wish to assume constructive roles for Turkey in inter and intra-state conflicts of the Caucasus.

A primary aim of Turkish diplomacy is to limit the Russian-Georgian crisis to the Caucasus region and to prevent its expansion to the wider Black Sea region. The region's states have a clear tendency to rely on outside actors and wider regional alliances for their security concerns. Azerbaijan and Georgia rely on NATO and Western powers and seek regional alliances with the Ukraine, Moldova and Turkey. Armenia



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Armenia suffers not only from the high cost of transportation but also from the danger of a cut in foreign trade due to fragile security situation in the Caucasus.

relies on Russia and is allies with Iran although it also receives support and a lot of empathy from the EU and the US. Russia calls on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization for support in the Caucasus. Turkey's Caucasian Stability Platform seeks to constitute the basis for a dialogue between the three Trans-Caucasian states, Russia and Turkey in order to contain the crisis within the region. Ankara highlights the need for the creation of a regional confidence and trust building mechanism to foster a regional understanding of security. Turkey also considers the new initiative as part of its responsibility as a NATO member since the initiative also seeks to prevent a likely NATO-Russia clash in the Black Sea region. If this approach succeeds, the region will cease to be a battleground for the rivalries between Russia, the US, NATO and EU with various combinations.

One requirement for Ankara to prepare the ground for such a platform was to normalize Turkey's relations with Armenia. Turkey would be subject to criticism for keeping its borders with Armenia sealed while initiating a regional peace initiative. Given the domestic polarization on this matter and the possible Azeri reservations Turkey could not take this necessary step sooner. With the outbreak of war in the region, the Platform initiative gave the authorities a legitimate cover to pursue direct and public contacts with Yerevan. Turkish-Armenian rapprochement is likely to bear a positive impact on Azeri-Armenian problems and should put an end to Armenia's isolation. Until now Yerevan had no option but keeping close to Russia. Turkey's isolation policy hurt the Armenian economy, shut it out of regional economic projects and helped destabilize the Armenian domestic political environment. Turkey's isolation policy has also reached its limits. The utmost this policy hoped to achieve was to generate the political will in Armenia for the normalization of relations with Turkey. In addition Turkey wished to push Yerevan to seek a fair solution to its territorial problems with Azerbaijan. After long years of stonewalling and demanding conditions from Turkey to engage, the Armenian leadership finally turned to the policy of normalizing relations with Turkey. Given the burgeoning regional diplomacy to work on Azeri-Armenian problems, it was about time to replace Turkey's isolation policy with a more inclusive approach. As Turkish President Abdullah Gül expressed to his Azerbaijani counterpart President Ilham Aliyev, Turkish policy makers' new perspective is predicated on the expectation that Turkish engagement with Armenia will facilitate a solution to the Karabakh problem and other outstanding territorial issues.

Armenia's motives for normalization

Armenia suffers from a condition of severe isolation in the region. It is a landlocked country and cannot use land transportation for people and goods because of the sealed

border with Turkey. It has to rely on Iranian and/or Georgian roads for land transportation, which means a great deal of extra cost for foreign trade. Almost 80 percent of Armenia's imported goods go through Georgia. Therefore, the fragile security situation is a big concern for Yerevan. Russian bombing of Georgia's Poti port is just the most recent development that exacerbated Armenia's anxieties. Armenia suffers not only from the high cost of transportation but also from the danger of a cut in foreign trade due to fragile security situation in the Caucasus. In addition, Turkey is the most reasonable trading partner for consumer and industrial goods in the region. Turkish goods reach Armenia through Georgia with extra cost added to them. Turkey is an emerging economy and may provide employment opportunities for Armenians. It is a known fact that tens of thousands of Armenians find employment in Turkey without a work permit. In economic terms it is quite obvious how Armenia will benefit from the opening of the borders.

diversifying energy supplies and supply routes to Europe. Armenia is not considered in any of these projects and there for lost considerably as a result of being ostracized. The normalization of relations with Turkey will pave the way for Armenia's involvement in future energy transportation projects.

Concluding observations

Turkey's current policy toward the Caucasus is realistic and projects reachable goals. It aims to create an environment of cooperation and eliminate regional power constellations. In a region marred by many factors of instability such as growing nuclear activities, international terrorism, violent regional rivalries, ethnic tensions, drug trafficking and illegal immigration as well as international competition for domination, Turkey's policy towards Caucasia seeks to contribute to peace and stability. The Russia-Georgia crisis has shown regional countries the importance of order and peaceful relations. The regional *status quo* should change, and the new regional order should



The third imperative of normalization on the Armenian side is Armenia's absence from regional energy supply projects due to its isolation by Turkey and Azerbaijan. There is considerable amount of oil and gas in the Caspian region. Turkey and Georgia benefit from this richness because of the pipelines that traverse their territories. Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline is an important project that created a regional scheme that immensely benefited Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. While a trans-Armenian passage was the most feasible route, it was not even considered due to Yerevan's problems with Azerbaijan and Turkey. The Russian-Georgian crisis brought forth novel projects for improving energy security and for

be based on a novel rhetoric and a practice of economic interdependence, political cooperation, regional stability and prosperity. Turkish-Armenian rapprochement would be a necessary step towards achieving this new regional order. In this sense, Turkey's cooperative attitude and new active foreign policy contribute handsomely to the construction of this new regional order. The recently growing number of high level mutual visits and the diversity of activities designed for the region are strong signs that Turkey's contributions to regional peace and stability will continue.

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crisis calls; competence needed

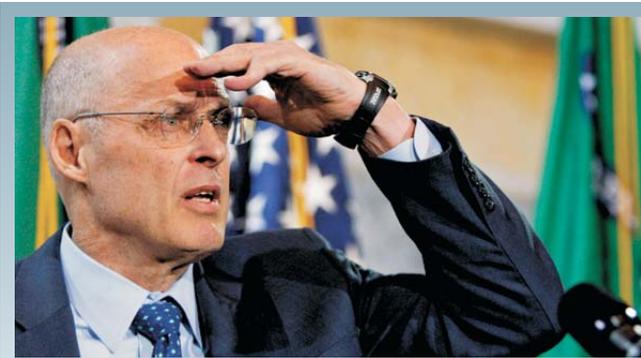


Çağlar Keyder

It is now undeniable that a major global transition is underway: the financial crisis will certainly spread to the real sector and there will be a recession with widespread unemployment. Even the most optimistic of neo-liberals abandoned the hope that markets can solve their own problems without massive intervention. During the early stages of globalization, financial integration was the principal process that justified our vision of the world as a single market. In fact, to the critics of globalization, the 1980s had ushered in nothing new except for the integration of financial markets thanks to new communication technologies. Financial globalization was indeed established, imposed and accepted much more rapidly than the unfettered flow of direct investment or commodity and services trade.

Since that early period, financial globalization has meant an enormous increase in the volume of funds circling the globe in search for quick profits in the virtual economy. The ratio of financial capital to the real economy has increased constantly (by one measure from one-half to five-times the real income).

Profit rates accruing to the financial sector now dwarf the net returns to capital invested in the real sector. These funds circling the globe were active in any market that permitted speculation. Investors gambled over future prices of grain and oil and real estate; they sold insurance and re-insurance in the form of "derivative" contracts designed to hedge against risk in bonds or mortgage debt; bundled these up with other resources, and this process appeared to be sustainable infinitely. These various forms of paper wealth were transacted for ever-shorter terms:



Sermons on the virtues of the market will lack credibility; governments will tighten the regulatory framework and will lay down new rules in order to protect their citizens against crises and unemployment.

with technology accelerating the process, options on currencies, interest rates and commodities were rapidly bought and sold, the entire process inflating the weight of the financial sector.

As could have been predicted, this volume and speed of money circulation, the growing disproportion between the financial sector and the real economy, terminated with the bursting of the bubble. Bubbles eventually burst, but not always with the same dire consequence. Recent bubbles such as in Japan and in East Asia did not lead to global recession. But today, the mortgage crisis starting in the US has already triggered a collapse of investment banking, and threatens financial institutions worldwide. Market fetishism is finally being questioned. Even American politicians and technocrats have started to defend state intervention, and Alan Greenspan admits to "a flaw" in his faith. Those who until recently viewed de-regulation as the solution have come to realize that market mechanisms cannot operate without the rules laid down by the state. This may well be a change that heralds the beginning of a new era for the entire global economy. From now on, sermons on the virtues of the market will lack credibility; governments will tighten the regulatory framework and will lay down new rules in order to protect their citizens against crises and unemployment. The autonomy of markets against governments will decline, even if protectionism in the 1930s vein can be avoided.

There is another implication of this transition: the certain decline of the financial sector relative to the real economy. Times of crisis ordinarily witness the emergence of new sectors, innovations in technology and rise of investment opportunity in producing new commodities. Innovation boosts profitability in the real economy and makes investment more attractive. Bright students gravitate to real sectors rather than the Wall Street banks, as higher incomes are offered not by financial institutions but by manufacturing. If and when markets recover they allocate investments to new technologies.

If these suppositions are valid, then we might also expect a drastic change in the governments' orientation in making and implementing policy. This new orientation may be in the form of more interventionist policy aiming to achieve targets in investment and technological change. Delegating the operation of the economy to the market means that policy makers only

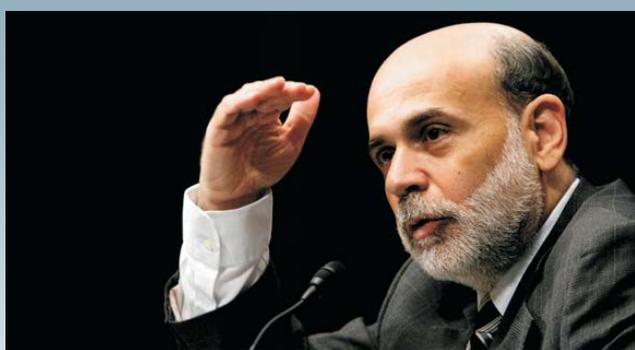
guarantee that the parameters are within the correct margins but refrain from attempting to influence specific investment decisions. Followers of Friedman declared victory against Keynesians during the post-1980 Thatcher and Reagan periods, arguing that the monetary authorities could do all that was necessary in terms of economic policy. Economists engaged in policy-making did not even have to be familiar with the real economy since they would leave everything to the market after having guaranteed that the parameters such as inflation and interest rates remained within a healthy range. This hands-off attitude contrasted radically with another paradigm in economic policy making, associated most recently with the 'embedded' policy makers of the developmental state.

The literature found this embedded state most notably in East Asia. In economic history, however, such dirigisme is found in as diverse experiences as France in the 1960s, and Japan in the 1970s. More significantly, following the Great Depression, all economies in the world adopted one or another form of statist economic policy, albeit within greatly diverging political regimes. In all these examples policy makers managed to build authority and trust relations with industrial sectors and attempted to convince investors of the validity of their preferences and forecasts. This mode of operation of the developmental state was castigated as "crony capitalism" by the liberal consensus.

In the new era, policy makers are more likely to move closer to the developmental state model and to build their intervention capability in the real sector. The 'infrastructural' strength of the state, its ability to construct a capacity to penetrate the economy, will emerge as a prerequisite for success. This, in turn, means that spending, employment and tax policies will inevitably replace monetary policies at the top of the agenda and that these policies will be implemented not at the macro but at the sectoral, even the individual company, level.

A look at Turkey's experience since the 1980s suggests that it does not have much experience in making policies for the real economy. The country adopted an economic policy that went with the flow. In the favorable investment environment that emerged following the 1980 coup Turgut Özal radically

In the new era, policy makers are more likely to move closer to the developmental state model and to build their intervention capability in the real sector.





dismantled the national developmentalist model of capital accumulation. The management of the economy was given over to the prevailing principles of the time, that is, IMF and World Bank based recommendations executed by technocrats who themselves came from Washington. In any event, the prescriptions of these institutions had already precluded the entertainment of alternative perspectives. In this respect, the AKP government emerged as a direct descendant of the Özal period. Privatizations accelerated under the rules introduced by Kemal Derviş while Central Bank policies, in conjunction with the global abundance of credit, created a favorable environment for foreign capital. The economy came out of the 2001 crisis rather quickly and avoided falling into another one, although problems, especially in current account deficit, accumulated. This in turn led to the belief that there was no point in searching for an alternative to liberal policies. This is why we now have to face the urgent question of policy transformation: is there sufficient experience and technocratic capacity in the government to devise policies adequate to the new period of crisis?

It will not be easy to design and implement the economic and social policies for the new era. Turkey does not command a

wealth of experience for effective policy-making. Statist policies of the earlier period have failed to develop a sophisticated government capability despite the planning orientation of the post-1960 period. This is not to argue that the cadres who gained experience at the State Planning Organization were inadequate to the task. Rather I am referring to inefficient deployment of the state's capacity and the deficiency of governmental mechanisms. The Ankara-Istanbul alienation and the resentment by Istanbul's industrialists of Ankara's power creates a situation where businessmen suspect policies to be either arbitrary or corrupt, and see bureaucrats as unjustifiably imperious. This is not a relationship that is conducive to the building of an embedded state mechanism with infrastructural strength. Although the bureaucrats may espouse a developmentalist ideology, it will be difficult for them to establish effective relations with industrialists or workers' organizations.

In the period after Özal, Ankara bureaucrats who had previously adopted a crude version of national developmentalism were eliminated. The new generation of young economists who had learned the neo-liberal doctrine in its homeland enjoyed unrivalled prestige. It should also be remembered that neo-liberalism was not merely a doctrine. IMF recipes did not only convince policy



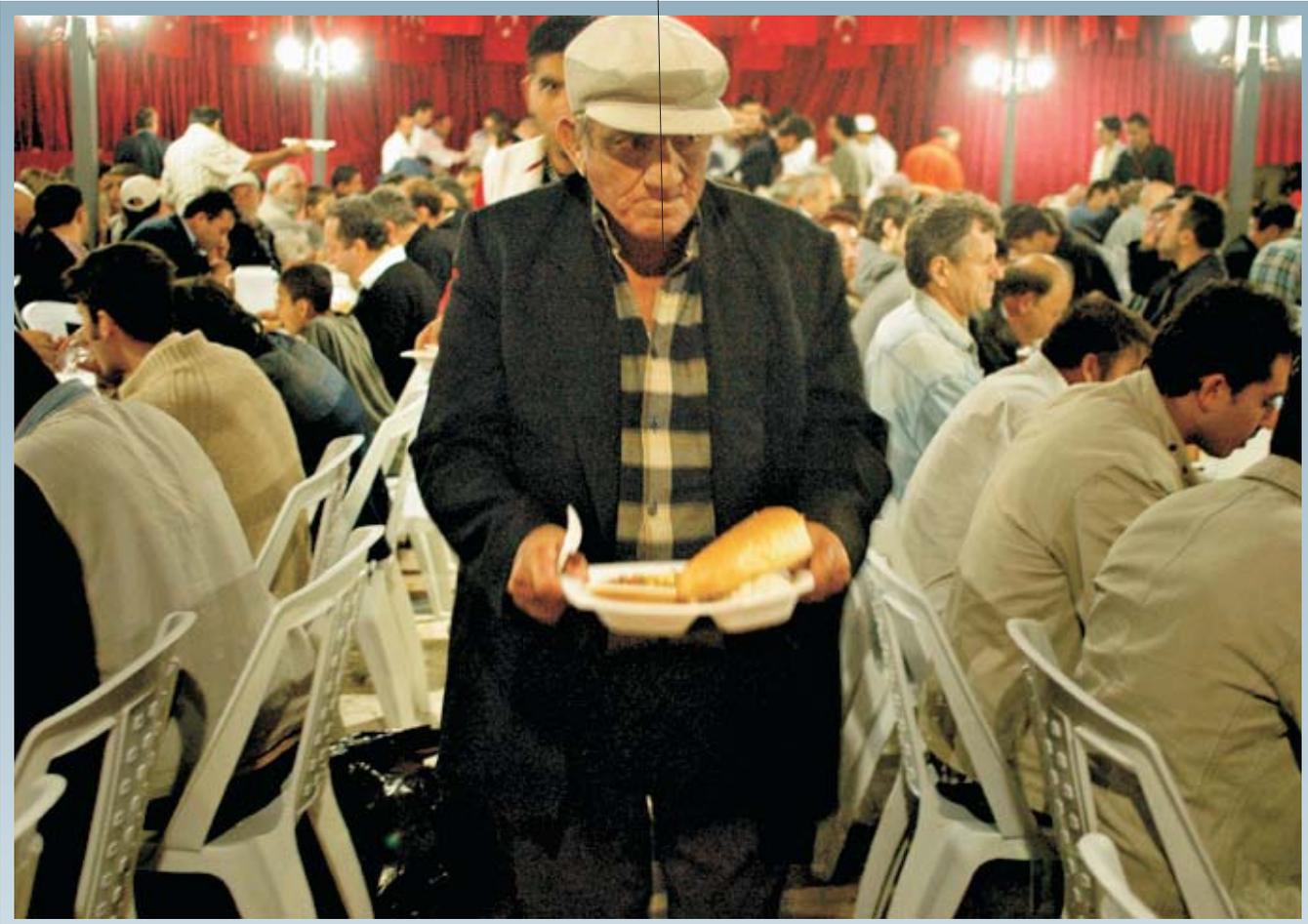
Regarding social policy and particularly social assistance, AKP is ideologically opposed to rights-based policies. They do not want to make poverty assistance into a citizenship right. Instead they extol the virtue of philanthropy and Islamic charity.

makers, they also effectively eliminated the state's intervention capacity. First by forcing the State Economic Enterprises to operate without subsidies and then by privatizing them these recipes further decreased the state's policy-making capacity in the real sector. The Central Bank, the symbol of financial globalization worldwide, was accorded constitutional autonomy, which became the most important factor in ruling out political preferences in the implementation of neo-liberal policies.

A second problem which will be faced in the probable re-orientation of the economy concerns the effects of the distribution of income. A product of the neo-liberal period in Turkey, as in the rest of the world, has been the worsening of income distribution. Two basic factors determine income distribution in modern capitalist economies: first, the structure of the economy such as the capital-labor ratio, the direction of technological change, and most important in this period, the impact of globalization. The second factor is political: the rules laid down by the state, the form of workers' organization it allows, its taxation and social expenditure policies. This is why, unlike the US and most third world countries, income distribution did not deteriorate greatly in European societies during this period. The main reason was that despite globalization, and

even if they transformed their economic policies to match the liberal blueprint, European states did not or could not alter their re-distributionist tax and social spending policies.

Income distribution is certainly important in its own right; people live interdependently and are affected by what goes on around them. Worsening income distribution reduces the feeling of solidarity in society; polarization of material life triggers separation also at other levels. Often, worsening income distribution offends people's innate sense of justice; they protest cutbacks in social spending and decline in public services and struggle to protect their rights. However, there is also a dimension of income distribution directly related to economic policy. There is a relationship between income distribution and the market for goods which also affects the pattern of production. A relatively even distribution would induce the economy to produce middle-class oriented goods, while a polarized income distribution will be characterized by a profusion of luxury items, fancy real estate, expensive SUVs, and employment equivalent to domestic service. Indeed, the so-called "Fordist" model of production in the golden years of capitalism (1945-75) was characterized by middle class oriented production within the framework of a relatively equitable income



distribution. If we are to move back to such a balance, the Turkish state will also need to develop policies towards improving the income distribution - primarily in the form of re-distributive social spending.

Policies maintained by the AKP government perpetuated the tendencies which had emerged in the 1980s. The abolishing of agricultural subsidies, failure to take measures towards the protection of workers, and haphazard improvement in social policy meant that all the imbalances of this global moment of neo-liberalism found their reflection in Turkey. Government revenues increased due mostly to indirect taxes. Despite a rhetoric advocating the direct taxation of high earnings, there seemed to be a reluctance to reform the tax code and no tangible project was put forward. Regarding social policy and particularly social assistance, AKP is ideologically opposed to rights-based policies. They do not want to make poverty assistance into a citizenship right. Instead they extol the virtue of philanthropy and Islamic charity. They reject the institutionalization of social rights and find it politically more expedient to continue with arbitrary and discontinuous assistance for the "needy".

As a recent example, the AKP wasted a very important opportunity in healthcare reform. In an environment where

half the population are informally employed, they opted for a contribution based system rather than a healthcare system which would be funded by taxes and cover all citizens. This makes citizens into customers who pay a premium out of their paychecks, rather than exercising a right when they need health services. Those without formal employment are supposed to pay into the Fund on their own. This is of course unrealistic, especially in times of precarious employment and declining incomes. Furthermore, those who do not pay will not be able to receive health services and they will even be considered delinquent. This arrangement will probably leave a considerable segment of the society uncovered and, worse, criminalized, because they have not paid into the fund. Access to healthcare determines one's quality of life and potentially compensates to some degree for the unevenness of the income distribution by bestowing the same status upon all citizens. Ideally, this should be a citizenship right, especially in a situation where formal employment is not the default status and cannot be the basis for coverage.

We don't know if inside AKP there is the capacity to achieve a transformation from neo-liberalism to a more social democratic stance. Critical voices outside the ruling party are still very



The current crisis will most likely take a heavy toll through unemployment and impoverishment. The alleviation of poverty will be an urgent task to be attended through strengthened social policy measures.

weak, and no project of social mobilization/opposition is in sight that could help bring about new political balances. Yet, with the threat of impending economic downturn, we need urgent policies to improve the income distribution and to provide for the basic needs of the citizens. The current crisis will most likely take a heavy toll through unemployment and impoverishment. The alleviation of poverty will be an urgent task to be attended through strengthened social policy measures. Such policies and direct income transfers also create a basis for government expenditure and fiscal policy in the Keynesian vein—a classic response to prolonged recession that aims to increase demand by distributing consumption capacity.

The state's ability to make the appropriate policies for a new era depends not only on a change in worldview but also on institutional capacity building. The cadres who are in direct contact with the real economy and might be able to devise the required micro measures have been ignored for long. The institutions and rules which would ensure their effectiveness are not in place. To attain the desired results in the supervision and control of the real sector, from technology infrastructure to healthcare provision, depends on the technical and political skills of regulatory boards, as

well as the trust that has to be built between them, the investors, and the citizens. Building such trust is a necessary prerequisite for the implementation of policies.

In the upcoming period, economic policies will need to be more concrete. Governments will find it difficult to settle only for seemingly neutral targets such as the control of inflation or ensuring monetary stability. Preferences regarding the real sector will have to be more explicitly put on the table. Income distribution will need to be transformed in accordance with the formation of new markets, but also because the coming crisis will bear most heavily on the poor. In the field of social policy, more comprehensive options addressing all citizens will have to be developed, and these will certainly claim a higher share in national income. Such policies will become easier to implement when policy-makers are trusted, when they achieve legitimacy among the citizens. It will no longer be possible to justify economic policy with the mantra of the previous period that this is a science that only finance PhDs understand. Policy will once again become a political issue and clashing normative conceptions of society will do political battle.

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Turkey between Tutelary Democracy and Electoral Authoritarianism

Yunus Muhsin Sözen

Since the constitutional crisis over the election of the president in 2007, Turkish politics has gone through tumultuous times characterized by a power struggle between two competing ideologies, Kemalism and the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) neo-conservative populism. At every important juncture (the drive to write a new constitution, the AKP's closure case, headscarf legislation, etc.) the forces that follow these ideologies lined up in a similar fashion. As a result of these battles, Turkey is clearly moving out of its tutelary democratic system, a form of defective democracy that aims to normalize a certain level of non-elected supervision (by the military, the high courts, etc.) over the elected representatives. But rather than transiting into a consolidated democracy as many expected, the move seems to be towards a new system under the AKP rule, which I term 'electoral authoritarianism': a regime that advocates democracy and competitive elections, but practices populist majoritarianism and treats elections as mere confirmations of the government's rule. Significantly, this move would not be possible if there were not a Kemalist defense of the tutelary supervision, because such a defense opened the way for the AKP to deepen its authoritarian leaning populist rhetoric, while appearing democratic.

Kemalism and tutelary democracy

Aspects of the Kemalist ideology provide the political vision of many of the oppositional groups in contemporary Turkey, and it is through this understanding that they form their political strategies.

Kemalism, as articulated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his followers, professed that for Turkey's political survival as an independent country, Turkish society needed to be transformed into a homogeneous and civilized country. Homogeneity meant a nation without social conflicts and political pluralism,

substantiated in the ideal of 'a fused society without classes or privileges', underwritten by the principles of *balkçılık* (populism), nationalism, and secularism. Civilization was conceived as becoming European in all social and political facets, exemplified in common Kemalist rhetoric as 'the attainment of the level of contemporary civilization', or 'either civilization or utter destruction'. This goal also constitutes the basis of Kemalism's principles of secularism and republicanism.

What does this mean in terms of the relationship between Kemalism and democracy, and the behavior of many important political actors today? During the interwar period when Europe included non-democratic regimes, single-party rule in Turkey did not violate the civilizationism principle. During the Cold War, the definitional requirements for being considered democratic were less strict than today, and this gave Kemalists enough freedom to reconcile their goal of civilizationism with their ideal of a homogeneous Turkish society. This was done by incorporating certain institutions of democracy like competitive elections, while excluding many of the associated liberal rights and without insulating politics from tutelary supervision.

However, especially after the Cold War, the idea of being civilized in political regime terms consolidated into the requirements for membership in the European Union (EU). It necessitated not only competitive elections but also the inclusion of liberal/group rights and eradicating the supervision of the non-elected. Thus, Kemalism's denial of pluralism and political liberalism, and its ideal of the state-induced transformation of society, started to conflict directly with its civilizationist aims. This has forced present day Kemalists to confront this tension. Some Kemalists have remained hesitant to make a decision, oscillating between positions, trying to reconcile the irreconcilable: between maintaining aspects of tutelary democracy, while not

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giving up the ideal of being part of the civilized world (the EU). In other words, these hesitant Kemalists are not entirely excluding military or juridical interference in democratic politics but they try to maintain the ideal of a liberal democracy. Others, under the banner of neo-nationalism (*ulusalcılık*) chose to openly support tutelary democracy or more direct versions of military or juridical intervention.

Neo-Conservative populism, Political Islam and the AKP

Kemalist ideology's aim to radically transform the society into a homogenous and civilized society inadvertently opened up the space for a reaction in the form of a conservative populism.

Populist political movements, conservative or not, generally claim to represent selected contemporary values of the people and appeal to the people against established political power. Populism's vision of democracy prioritizes popular will or national sovereignty over the rights of the individual; it privileges majoritarianism and direct political participation (e.g., plebiscites, referenda) over the checks and balances of liberal politics or calls for a direct relationship between the leader and the people. Also, populism's rhetoric 'of/for the people' is always concretized by exclusionary categories, such as labeling opposition groups as 'the enemy of the people', elites, the oligarchy, or the anti-people depending on the national context. Populism thus creates a challenging political environment for the opposition as well as for the maintenance of individual liberties and collective rights and therefore, for modern liberal constitutional democracy.

Kemalism was progressive and sought a socio-cultural transformation; therefore, a conservative and populist discursive space was opened for oppositional acquisition. This space was first filled by the Democrat Party (DP) in the 1950's. DP's ideology cherished the contemporary values of the people and



gave up the idea of cultural transformation. This conservative populism survived as one of the main ideologies of the country in different forms and under different party names of the central right. The AKP is yet another incarnation of this ideology but with an important distinction from the tradition: the AKP has its roots in the Islamic political movement of Turkey (the National Outlook Movement-NOM). As such, it constitutes a particularly problematic version of populism for democracy. However, the problem is not the often-stated Kemalist concern about the sincerity of the AKP's break from its NOM roots, which emphasizes the problematic relationship of political Islam and democracy. Rather, the problem is how this unique combination strengthens the authoritarian leanings inherent in all populisms.

Since the 1950's Turkey was ruled almost exclusively by market-oriented conservative governments, but these were only against the project of cultural modernization. The AKP on the other hand, combines market-orientation with a project of creating a more conservative society (neo-conservative



project). Hence just like the Kemalists, AKP elites are social engineers. In other words, unlike traditional conservatives, the neo-conservative populists' claim to represent the contemporary values of the people includes constructing a set of values as the dominant values of the people - mostly those coming from Islamic sensitivities. Then they promote the policy connotations of these values as the will of the majority/people. Therefore, neo-conservative ideology provides the substance for AKP's populism.

Another contribution of the AKP's Political Islamic roots to the virulence of its populism is that unlike its conservative precursors, it has a tradition of forming political ideas from the vantage point of 'the repressed people'. The Islamic movement participated in multiple governments in the 1970s, and benefited from the ideological aura of the post-1980 military regime; however, it remained a peripheral element in political elite circles and was at odds with the formative principles of the Republic (although not with the actual conservative rulers). Additionally, in the latter half of the 1990s when they ascended to power, they faced a strong tutelary reaction. These factors allowed them to conceptualize themselves as outsiders, and the political context as exclusionary. As a result, once in power the AKP could comfortably advance its majoritarianism into a more forceful populist claim of representing the 'oppressed majority' that earlier conservative populist parties could not. Finally, because of their recent problematic relationship with the establishment that reacted against their political Islamic roots, they showed an initial intention to get rid of the tutelary supervision and in this way they secured the support of some politically liberal intellectuals. This support, in turn, provided them with legitimacy in extending their power, as well as immunity from standard liberal criticisms against populist politics.

Another feature of this neo-conservative populism is its

uncanny ability to sustain its claim of representing the downtrodden given its strong market-orientation. This is done not only ideologically, but also by building privatized economic relations with the lower classes - through a web of personalized state and Islamic charity aid as opposed to universal, citizenship and rights-based welfare programs. In fact, we can trace the AKP's current hegemony to the initiation of these privatized economic dependency relations at the local level. Later on, these relationships were bolstered with public funds, first through the municipalities where they came to power in the 1990s, and then through the national government (local state administrators). These relationships have been critical in the constitution of their hegemony because they provided the material base for the populist ideology.

This means that in their fight against the opposition, the AKP formed an unusual coalition for a right-wing populist project with strong conservative and authoritarian undertones, including not only lower classes, but also more traditional conservative state and political elites, political Islamists, and a contingent of economic and political liberals.

Power struggles between two visions

Since the failed presidential election of April 2007, Turkish politics has become an arena where these two political visions have clashed, resulting in a clear movement from tutelary democracy to populist competitive authoritarianism. This does not mean that the Kemalist opposition has lost every battle. However, even the AKP's losses provided the party with additional ideological tools to believably present its authoritarian-leaning populism as democratic. A number of key issues have figured in this process.

The presidency, a post of symbolic importance under parliamentary systems, was transformed into a significant

It is possible to argue that when AKP populism is unleashed on such a symbolically significant issue as the headscarf, it starts to create exclusionary social pressures on those who do not share AKP's values.

institution with the 1982 constitution. In 2007, the AKP decided to nominate one of its core members from the political Islam movement, Abdullah Gül. This triggered a number of strategic extra-democratic reactions from the opposition, including an e-memorandum (electronic posting) by the military, and the highly controversial decision by the constitutional court barring the AKP from electing Gül as president and forcing early elections. Equally important was that these extra-democratic impediments provided reinforcement to AKP rule. The AKP used this tutelary strike to enlarge its populist rhetoric, arguing that this was 'the tyranny of the minority over the majority', blocking the possibility of electing a "pious" president in Turkey (a statement of dubious factuality) and further, that the key to resolving this conundrum belonged to the people, as in 'God willing, the president of the republic one day will be chosen by the public'. Thus, the AKP once again could present its populism as democratic and strengthen its liberal support. Additionally, the ideological environment made it very difficult to argue against the AKP's choice (or its timing, in a tired parliament at the end of its term), because this meant risking being labeled as not only a laicist (laikçi) elite, but also as against the 'first religious president of Turkey', the people's will, and democracy.

After a politically intense summer, the AKP came out victorious in the general elections. In his electoral victory speech, Prime Minister Erdoğan seemed to embrace all the citizens not just 'the people' of his populist ideology. With the participation of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) in the parliamentary meetings, Abdullah Gül was elected president on August 28th. This was followed by a referendum to determine the election method for subsequent presidents, a remnant of the pre-election clash. In another victory for the AKP, the people decided that presidents should be popularly elected, rather than by the parliament. Overall, these developments gave the appearance



that the polarization between Kemalists and neo-conservative populists was subsiding.

In the meantime, draft preparations for a new AKP-initiated constitution picked up speed. According to its proponents, this would be a civil and democratic constitution that would enlarge the scope of individual and collective freedoms, and would also remove the tutelary supervision over elected representatives. A committee of liberal and conservative academics prepared the original draft. These were critical of the military and judicial intervention into the democratic process, and sided with the AKP during the presidential election debacle. Despite the problems associated with the constitution-making process, strong neo-nationalist opposition and neo-conservative modifications proposed by some members of the AKP, a new constitution would have helped the democratic process. It would have contributed, though, only to the destructive phase of the tutelary regime, and not to the constructive phase of the AKP's electoral authoritarianism. As such, by providing a more democratic framework it would become a venue of democratic habituation for political actors in resolving their conflicts. However, in early 2008, the AKP aborted the new civil constitution during the headscarf debate. Given the AKP's neo-conservative populism,



The government had already secured the support of most other media groups, some through highly suspicious means, this situation was alarmingly Putinesque

this move can be interpreted as the second of two routes to eradicating tutelary supervision over its own rule. The first would be dismantling the constitutional status of tutelary supervision and instituting freedoms for everyone; the second is to conquer the institutions that sustain the tutelary supervision.

The headscarf issue not only led the AKP to abandon the new constitution, but it again polarized the country along the same ideological lines. Kemalism often argued that the Turkish people's uncivilized (non-Western) appearance prevents them from revealing their civilized core. As a result, Kemalist social engineering focused on transforming the way Turkish people look (particularly the women). However social intrusion led to another appearance-oriented oppositional religious reaction. Thus the headscarf became a symbol through which different Turkish visions intensely clash. When the MHP proposed to lift the university ban on headscarves, the AKP had to accept it given its previous stance on the issue. However, the proposal led to serious opposition from the Kemalists. It also became apparent that easy avenues to a legal solution were blocked due to a number of high court decisions since the first ban was instituted in the mid-1980s. As a result, the AKP attempted to solve the problem with a constitutional change, which was subsequently taken to the constitutional court by the CHP where it was overturned on the basis of its violation of the secularism principle (June 2008).

Once again Kemalist forces managed to obstruct the government, compensating for their sheer lack in voting numbers with their current hold in a few critical institutions. Nevertheless, this once again provided the AKP with ideological tools to deepen its populist hegemony. First, being frustrated by supervision once more gave the AKP a justification for conquering institutions (including universities, the higher education council and the judiciary), without fearing significant criticism for being

undemocratic. Second, while it is almost impossible to legitimately reconcile the university headscarf ban with liberal democratic principles, the way public debates took place considerably narrowed the oppositional field. Suddenly, the only categories to make sense of this multi-faceted issue became the ones that equated the AKP with freedoms, popular will, democracy, and the political embodiment of Turkish cultural values, while constructing the opposition as the enemies of freedom, the people, and democracy as well as alienated from their own culture. Considering these political-ideological processes along with the neo-conservative social engineering of the AKP, it is possible to argue that when AKP populism is unleashed on such a symbolically significant issue, it starts to create exclusionary social pressures on those who do not share the AKP's values because they control a number of socio-political institutions (government, local authorities, bureaucracy, a significant proportion of the media, religious communities, etc.).

The headscarf issue became entangled with an even more aggressive move at the end of March 2008, when the Chief Prosecutor of the Republic demanded the closure of the AKP on the grounds of activities against the secular regime. This was arguably the last strike of the tutelary regime. However, this time, amid strong reactions from the EU and intensified populist charges against the judiciary, the constitutional court opted for what the media called 'the middle road': to punish the AKP without closing it down. While 10 out of 11 judges of the Court determined that the AKP is the focal point of activities against secularism, only 6 out of 11, one shy of the required supra-majority, decided in favor of closure. The decision was against the desires of the neo-nationalist faction of Kemalists who had given up the civilizationist ideal; however, it also demonstrated that many Kemalists were not ready to completely give up that ideal (EU). On the flip side, the AKP



was again able to use this extra-democratic setback to more comfortably rule over Turkey, to deepen the opposition-averse ideological aura, and strengthen liberal support.

Notably, in the last two issues the main actor of tutelary supervision was the judiciary rather than the usual suspect, the military. It appears that the top echelons of the military are moving away from neo-nationalism in the name of hesitant Kemalism, which aims not only at a homogeneous country but also a civilized one. Therefore, while the military is slowly retreating from daily politics and relaxing its tutelary supervision, it is carving out the Kurdish question as its exclusive jurisdiction. In this division of labor, in spite of the strong disincentive for hierarchical military intervention, the neo-nationalist sentiment remains widespread in the military establishment and still poses the threat of a non-hierarchical intervention. This is the context within which the Ergenekon trial is taking place.

The Ergenekon investigation started with the discovery of ammunitions connected to a number of retired military personnel and neo-nationalists in June 2007. By the beginning of 2008, it had progressively enlarged to include a number of well-known neo-nationalist journalists, academics, civil society leaders, and retired military personnel accused of trying to overthrow the government. Differently to the previous public polarization along the lines of Kemalists versus neo-conservative populists, the Ergenekon case is situated right at the intersection of the interests of the top echelons of the military and the AKP, because it neutralizes neo-nationalist opposition for both. The trial also weakened the tutelary supervision over the AKP and lent its supporters new terms to label the opposition: Ergenekonists and juntaists.

With the Ergenekon trials the authoritarian aspirations of neo-nationalists are neutralized, and over the last two years it became apparent that judicial tutelage could not sustain itself and that the army will not intervene. During these same processes, the AKP has accumulated enormous socio-political power, by not only helping create a friendly bourgeoisie, and a wide web of religious communities, but also by securing the compliance of almost all of the social, political and economic institutions. The long list includes not only the presidency, the parliament/cabinet, the municipalities, the Higher Education Council, most of the bureaucracy, and the 'autonomous' state institutions, but also a significant proportion of trade unions, institutions of education, and the media.

It was under these circumstances that in September 2008, Prime Minister Erdoğan started a populist war against the media. This was done in response to the opposition media's broadcast of the *Deniz Feneri* (Lighthouse) foundation trial, a large charity with organic relations to the AKP involved in a corruption scheme in Germany. Erdoğan's rhetoric started by blackmailing the Doğan media group reporting on the trial, accusing it of resorting to extra-legal measures (being corrupt), and ended with an appeal to boycott the Doğan newspapers. Keeping in

mind that the government had already secured the support of most other media groups, some through highly suspicious means, this situation was alarmingly Putinesque. Throughout the quarrel, in addition to their aim of openly subjugating the oppositional media by accusing it of being corrupt (a standard populists-in-power strategy of opposition subjugation), Erdoğan and the AKP-friendly media used multiple populist strategies to further narrow down the oppositional field. First, they depicted the Doğan media as more powerful than the government by employing rhetorical tools that portray the AKP as 'the representative of the oppressed majority', or 'a pariah in its own country'. Hence, they represented the opposition media as all-powerful alienated secularist elites and therefore not credible. Second, they ideologically repositioned all the actors who are trying to expose the corruption as attacking Islamic conservative charity culture and as affluent laicists who are foreign to the values of the common people of Turkey.

Therefore, the AKP exacerbates authoritarian tendencies that exist in all populisms. Like all populists, the AKP utilizes rhetorical tools that help it to use power without restraint (as in its claim that its actions represent the popular will) or to reconfigure politics in the 'friends versus foe' form in order to limit the legitimacy/space of oppositional politics. However, in the sphere of political domination, the AKP goes further, using these tools to advance its claims on all sources of power as its rightful domain whether it be the media, trade-unions, economic power.

Conclusion

The last two years of Turkish politics have been intense and transformative. There is a strong shift away from Turkey's tutelary democracy. However, because Kemalists did not want to go without a fight, they inadvertently provided a fertile ground for the AKP's neo-conservative populism to become the hegemonic ideology which included: determining the terms of the political conflicts, narrowing down the oppositional space, as well as concentrating socio-political power in its own hands.

Considering its ideology and its level of success in acquiring power, the AKP demonstrates significant differences from comparable contemporary populist movements. On the one hand, the AKP is a more authoritarian and all-encompassing version of the first world neo-conservative populisms (as in American republicanism under G.W.Bush), on the other hand, it is a significantly more socially dominant (through its neo-conservatism and anti-egalitarianism) version of the left-wing populisms of Latin America.

Given the hegemony of this comparable but unique movement, Turkey is now on its way to institutionalizing electoral authoritarianism. Therefore, it is perhaps even further from a consolidated democracy than it was 2 years ago.

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DOĞUŞ GROUP

CAN AKP STILL DELIVER?

Nilüfer Kuyaş

Turkey’s ruling Justice and Development Party (JDP / AKP) has been in power for nearly six years now and still remains an enigma for political scientists at home and abroad.

The story of its political fortunes is as yet unfolding quite dramatically and the volume under review is one of many attempts at coming to grips with what that story will entail for the long term prospects of democracy in the country.

I must begin by saying that the title of the book under review, *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey*, confused me a little and as I finished reading it I had a strong feeling that this might be a misnomer. A title such as “Secularism and Islam in Turkish Politics” would have been more apt. For that is precisely the gist of the story being told here: The constitutionally secularist foundation of the Turkish state and the extent to which Islam can inform political action in such a country without overstepping the boundaries of democratic legitimacy.

The authors rightly point out that those boundaries have been a constant fault-line in modern Turkish politics; the subtitle of the book is “The making of the Justice and Development Party”. The fundamental question is, to what extent the AKP has been or will be able to blur those boundaries (red lines as some call it), how it differs from its overtly Islamist predecessors in going about this or whether in fact it has any intention to do so.

In other words, is the AKP a covertly Islamist party pursuing a hidden agenda to erode and even change the secularist foundation of Turkey, or has it truly broken away from any such agenda altogether, as its leadership constantly claims?

These are difficult questions to answer, but the authors give the body-politic a thorough check-up over this matter. Their main task is to decipher the redefinition of religious conservatism in the country, and in particular the astute sleight of hand whereby the AKP presented its position from the start as “conservative democrat” rather than outright Islamist in outlook; a move which turned the tables on the secularist establishment and created much confusion in political terminology.

One of the contributors, Ahmet Yıldız, reminds us that the ‘conservative-democrat’ tag has created unease because “there is no

such concept in the literature.” Was this just a cunning ruse? Yıldız seems to think so, but without attributing any “hidden agenda” motives to the AKP. He simply argues that this new conservative democrat identity “is basically a tool of political legitimacy. This search for political legitimacy appeals to three target groups.”

According to Yıldız, it appeals firstly to the Turkish voter by emphasizing native sensitivities. Election results show that this has worked. Secondly, it targets Western opinion by utilizing familiar Western ideological terminology; the considerable slack given to Erdoğan’s party by both the EU and the US seems to vindicate this as well. And finally, it wrong-foots the Kemalist secularist establishment by repudiating any links with the more familiar tide of political Islam in the country. This was represented by a long line of political parties that have so far failed with their openly fundamentalist agenda, under the umbrella of the so-called National Outlook Movement (NOM), and the leadership of the now largely marginalized veteran Islamist, Necmettin Erbakan. Here, of course, the results are more mixed.

The question then arises, is this a kind of “New Islamism” and is the AKP a “post-Islamist” party “which maintains its Islamic credentials on social issues but abandons Islam as a political program?” Whatever the answer may be to that difficult question, there seems little doubt that there has been a sea change in the relation of Islamism to democratic politics in Turkey. Yıldız reports that recent literature perceives the AKP “as a case of reconciliation between democracy and Islamic identity and management of the tension between secular authoritarianism and Islamic fundamentalism by peaceful means.”

It is also important to remember a specific and probably historical feature of the Turkish experience here. Another pair of contributors to this volume, Menderes Çınar and Burhanettin Duran emphasize in their joint article the fact that “Turkish Islamists have usually preferred more responsible and peaceful choices in presenting a counter-cultural model of modernity and in presenting a counter elite to the Kemalist one”.

The editor of the volume, Professor Ümit Cizre, characterizes this situation as a pragmatic bid for broader-based electoral support and a desire to evolve into a party of mass appeal: “The commitment

to transform Turkey's political landscape was also part of an engagement to transform the identity of the party" she says. "Opting for a conservative democrat identity was predicated on the model of Turkey's centre-right platforms. The leadership set a profile loyal to the central values of the Republic as well as to those of Western democracy."

This was, according to Cizre, the main internal catalyst that propelled the AKP to pursuing a path-breaking and unprecedented reform agenda, at least during the first three years in office, from 2002 to 2005. AKP's reformist élan towards integration with the European Union was in fact the mainstay of its grip on power initially, along with a strict adherence to IMF led economic reform and liberal economic policies. Turkey curbed inflation and began achieving impressive growth rates.

The story of how that upward curve began to flag is the second and I believe more interesting dimension of this book but it is also here that I find it has been let down by unfortunate timing. The significance of events that took place right after this volume went to print, in the late Spring of 2007, make it look more dated than it deserves to be.

Almost all of the eight articles in the book analyze at least one dimension of how and why the wind was cut from under the AKP's reformist sails and they all conclude with some pointers as to how future alternatives might exacerbate or reverse this downward trend. Nevertheless, the increase in tension and conflict across the political arena since the book went to print, in the past year and a half, has truly been colossal; while these new developments bear out some of the predictions made in this book, in many ways they also expose its weaknesses in terms of explanatory thrust.

As it stands, the book reserves too much space for the history of the Islamist movement from which the AKP emerged; there is much repetitiveness on this score as most of the articles re-tell the same story and cover the same ground. One strong historical chapter would have well sufficed and left more room for conceptualizing the political process that is still unfolding.

That being said, though, the book is strong on political analysis.

Professor Cizre is a specialist in military-civilian relations in modern Turkish politics and puts in an excellent chapter on the AKP's interaction with the Armed Forces and its various maneuvers to forestall military assertiveness, to avoid confrontation and the kind of "intervention by memorandum" which had removed Erbakan from government in 1997 and went down in the political annals as "The 28 February Process."

Sure enough, the government was served precisely such a memorandum on April 27 2007, just as this book went to print.

The government was at loggerheads with the secularist establishment, led by the Armed Forces and the main opposition,

Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey

The making of the Justice and Development Party

Edited by
Ümit Cizre

Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics

The Republican People's Party (CHP), over its insistence on the partisan candidacy of Abdullah Gül, the second man of the party echelon, for the office of President. The Army made its move with the memorandum, the AKP stood its ground and Abdullah Gül was eventually elected President, but his assuming office also cost the country a slightly earlier general election than expected, which the AKP again won by a landslide.

No wonder then that six months later, in March 2008, the state prosecutor opened a case in the Constitutional Court demanding that the Party be closed down on account of being the centre of activities allegedly eroding the secularist foundation of the Republic. Ümit Cizre emphasizes that alongside the ongoing threat of military intervention, judicial intervention has been one of the mainstays of the establishment in its attempt to contain the AKP's "hidden agenda" potential.

She clearly states in her introduction that "The courts have been at the forefront of the secular campaign to expose the JDP's Islamic aspirations, warn the public about the possible consequences and adopt an exclusionary conception of 'identity', sharpening up the existing political polarization."

Events that followed the second electoral landslide victory have in fact confirmed this analysis. The Constitutional Court case was widely perceived as an attempt at a “judicial coup” against the government. Again, however, this volume disappoints in the limited space it allocates to this very important issue.

The Constitutional Court made a historical ruling in the late summer of 2008, with a decision not to close down the AKP; six of its eleven members had in fact voted in favor of closure, but fell short of the majority of seven votes needed. Instead, the Court issued a clear warning to the government: Its Treasury aid would be halved. This meant that the prosecutor’s allegation about the party acting as a center of anti-secular activity still stands and the government is still under a cloud.

The AKP and its charismatic leader, Tayyip Erdoğan thus received a slap on the wrist, but this seems to have affected no change whatsoever on his or their understanding of democracy as simply a case of majoritarian rule, accountable only to the electorate. These variables of weak accountability, judicial limits and the separation of powers are crucial both in Turkey’s democratic tradition and more importantly in the kind of power struggle raging at the moment around AKP rule. In the book, the topic suffers from diffusion and repetitiveness. Yet, the important issue of judicial intervention is subjected to a short but significant analysis by one of the contributors. Menderes Çınar in his article on the Kemalist establishment conceptualizes this practice of judicial intervention in Turkey as “the devaluation of politics.” He points out that this might at first seem in line with the present global trend of judicializing politics as part of a checks and balances initiative, aiming to limit the rule of parliamentary majorities of uneven proportions. The Turkish case, however, is anomalous according to Çınar, who states that “..in the case of Turkey, the concern is not just circumscribing majoritarian logic but removing political issues from the legitimate sphere of politics.” Çınar argues that in the Turkish case “..politics is not expected to address certain societal grievances and thereby fulfill its role as a link between state and society.” On the contrary, the Turkish manner of judicializing politics “categorizes political criticism of the current practice of secularism as disrespectful of the rule of law and as a criminal act abusing religion for political ends.”

This approach means according to Çınar “a defence of secularism at the expense of democracy.” I am in complete agreement with this and happen to believe that along with lack of clear accountability, it is one of the endemic weaknesses of the Turkish political system. Traditionally, of course, it has been the military wing of the establishment that has been always more ready to sacrifice democracy in the name of secularism when it comes to dealing with the Islamic threat, which the Armed Forces have always viewed in the narrow and authoritarian terms of an internal security problem. Ümit Cizre draws the parameters clearly: “The establishment’s position on the hidden agenda is non-negotiable. If the JDP captures an electorally and morally strong position in the eyes of the public as a legitimate and accepted part of politics, in all likelihood, it will exacerbate the tensions between the guardians of the military and itself and cause

an intervention of some modality. Winning in this sense will mean losing the political power the party strives for absolutely.”

These words have proved prescient. The current Chief of Staff of the armed forces, İlker Başbuğ, has adopted a high profile, gone on the offensive, and recently declared in a press briefing that the army still stands firmly behind the February 28 Process. The war of initiatives is not limited to the military however. Cizre’s analysis has proved exact not only with regard to the position of the military, nor again just regarding the Constitutional Court case against the AKP, but also in relation to a dirty tricks campaign that was unleashed on both sides of the divide since then. This has now taken an ugly and dangerous turn, exposing a fundamental weaknesses in AKP’s position.

Immediately after the Constitutional Court case, the AKP launched an unprecedented judicial investigation into the activities of certain ex-military and civilian groupings, whose allegedly covert and illegal activities included incitement to a military coup, as well as the staging of disinformation and smear campaigns to discredit the Party. There were even allegations of links with extra-judicial executions and assassination attempts to destabilize the government.

Popularly known as the *Ergenekon* Investigation, it is hard to tell whether this was a genuine attempt by the government towards a much needed transparency in public affairs or whether it was a disingenuous showing of hands in a war of political attrition; this is still a matter of hot debate. But whichever the case may be, the whole episode exposes what I have termed the fundamental weakness in the AKP’s approach to democracy, a weakness that could in the end cause its downfall. It is on this point that I find the analyses of the present volume to be most effective and important.

Ümit Cizre points out very cogently, “There has been a bleak side to the party’s performance on many levels since 2005” and goes on to state : “A central question of this volume is to seek explanations of the JDP’s loss of potential to transform the macro parameters of Turkey’s politics that would enable the system to move toward a new era of more democracy and better opportunities.”

Although outside the scope of this book, a recent corruption scandal must be touched upon here, as it has direct bearing on the issue in question and illustrates the question of the AKP’s “bleak side. A charitable foundation with members or affiliates close to government circles was at the center of the scandal. Referred to in the press as *Deniz Feneri* / The Lighthouse Affair, it involved the prosecution and conviction of various individuals in Germany for embezzlement and illegal transfer of funds to Turkey. This is not the first corruption scandal that implicates the cadres or sympathizers of an Islamist party in power. But Prime Minister Erdoğan’s reaction to personal innuendo in the press has been unprecedented in its virulence. He took on a prominent media group and eventually the press itself in a confrontational style which clearly demonstrated how easily he can lose his cool when it comes to conceding moral ground.

The contributors to this volume consistently, and rightly, emphasize how Islamist parties in Turkey in general and AKP in particular have been careful to toe a line of confrontation avoidance and what they term “a politics of patience” in face of pressure or even repression



from the secular establishment. But patience sometimes does run out, as it did in this case, revealing a chink in the shining armor.

Burhanettin Duran's contribution explains the deep-seated pragmatic trend in the politics of the AKP as having "grown out of the local government experiences of its leadership cadre." Erdoğan himself rose to prominence as the popular mayor of Istanbul. According to Duran the AKP is thus "not a party of identity so much as a party that is oriented towards better services." But here is the built-in weakness of the party. Duran explains that the party has been "losing its potential to transform the parameters of Turkish politics in general and Islamist politics in particular as the task of transformation becomes much more subjected to daily political calculations."

According to many contributors to this volume, this is the main reason why "Euro fatigue" has set in on the AKP's foreign policy and why it has been unable to push for further democratic reform. A deeper structural fault seems to lie behind this inability, which we can perhaps characterize as the state-oriented and authoritarian tendencies of all right wing parties in Turkey. Again according to Duran, the tensions with the secularist establishment have perhaps resulted in "the loss of internal democracy discourse within the party." This decline of internal democracy and the rise of authoritarian reflexes might be construed as "the submission of the JDP to the dominant forces of Turkish political culture."

Reactionism on both sides of the secularist-Islamist divide seems to demonstrate, according to another contributor, Menderes Çınar, "that the rule of law as the life-line of a political movement/party to physically survive has yet to be established in Turkey." Çınar argues that democratization has to provide true accountability, which means a change in power relations between state and society; but he finds that the AKP is as reluctant as the next party in politicizing certain issues beyond a certain point; "The JDP therefore reproduces Kemalism's distaste for politicization while rejecting the state's tutelage over the political class." Erdoğan's movement has so far been unable to move beyond this dilemma.

This inadequate understanding of democracy is also evident "in the uneasy reaction the JDP leadership shows to public criticism" according to Çınar. This is also the reason why, for Duran, "the JDP has not been able to remove identity issues such as the Kurdish question and the headscarf problem from being issues of survival politics and turn them into issues resolvable by more cooperative forms of problem solving."

Finally, the last but not the least contribution to this volume comes from Ertan Aydın and İbrahim Dalmış, who I believe make one of

the most important observations about the AKP's political alignment, which might explain its fundamental weakness. In their overview of empirical data from recent research into the social base of the party, this pair of writers conclude that the AKP is as much the inheritor of the Motherland Party (ANAP) legacy as it is of the Islamist movement, if not more.

It seems that the paradoxical movement of liberal innovation within conservative parameters initiated by Turgut Özal twenty five years ago might be a better explanatory model for AKP's deeper motives. Data show that the party has consistently sought a widening of its base beyond the classical Islamist constituency; Aydın and Dalmış observe that while the party has achieved this goal to a significant extent in electoral terms, it has failed to inject the desired variety into its own local organizations and parliamentary representation that are still filled with people from the traditional Islamist circles of NOM.

The resulting paradox is that while the AKP is more truly a political follower of previous mass appeal centre-right parties, its cadres are still old style Islamists "who steer the party toward being more conservative. This might be one of the potential causes of occasional disharmony between the Party's discourse and praxis." Ahmet Yıldız also agrees with this; "liberal-nationalist bifurcation within the party has created backlashes in its EU policy" he believes.

It seems that the Islamist past is not so easy to shake off. I think it is mostly at this level of analysis that we can begin to understand the dilemmas and internal tensions of the AKP in power and explain for instance its inability to push for further reform either in lessening the overwhelming influence of the military in Turkish politics or in improving the status of minorities in the country, thus falling short of EU expectations.

But these tensions might also explain why this new phase of political experiment in Turkish democracy is such a double-edged process, open at one and the same time to grave risk and to significant progress. Duran and Çınar conclude their article on a note of "fresh but precarious hope for reconciliation of democracy and Islam/secularism." The case of AKP they believe is so interesting precisely because "it shows how Islamist politicians can transform their conflict-based ideology into compromise-and consensus-based reform under convenient conditions."

The problem is of course that politics cannot usually enjoy the luxury of convenience; the open question is whether the AKP can continue to deliver under inconvenient conditions.

Nilüfer Kuyaş is the author of the novel Yeni Baştan.



**NURI BİLGE
CEYLAN**

*IT was
so true to form.*

Nuri Bilge Ceylan, the unassuming and solitary director of *Three Monkeys* who won this year's Best Director award with this film at the Cannes Film Festival, dedicated it to "my lonely and beautiful country, which I love passionately."

The enigmatic and self-effacing Ceylan thus gave away not just the object of his own passion, Turkey, but also the code words that one needs to decipher her.

Essay by Evrim Altuğ • Photographs by Alexis Petridis

In his quest for self-realization, Ceylan the director, scriptwriter and photographer endeavored early on to inject himself with that very universal multilayered quality we see in Istanbul, in other words, the pearl of Turkey.

For Istanbul is a city that has seen it all. In the past 60 years, since the 'floodgates' of migration opened, she was also a battered if still beautiful witness to the traumas and tensions of urbane Turkey's brutal encounter with its hitherto invisible rural periphery.

The peculiarities and complexities of that encounter and the, often violent tensions that it engendered defined today's Turkey and its solitude. Ceylan's work draws on this tension and the anxieties of the "provincial" both to depict his characters and define their environment.

A graduate of the department of Electrical engineering at Bosphorus University in Istanbul, where he discovered his own Platonic 'cave' the young Ceylan was himself that transitional figure of Turkey, the middle class urban youth curious about the West and its ways but who still reeked of the countryside.

Buried in an old armchair in an obscure corner of the library, Ceylan immersed himself in older issues of magazines that cover photography and film. "There on the creaking floor, he spent years scanning through magazines and books." He looked at the photographs, ruminated, and daydreamed. That armchair shaped his understanding of the visual world.

The characters in Ceylan's films always think with a purpose just like the young would-be engineer in his armchair. Their distress is real, existential and very visible. It is sincere. Ceylan treats certain universally contested topics, such as birth, life, nature, guilt, death or time with intense curiosity. Nature in all its forms is present as a non-intervening witness almost as an extra that is just present and visible in all its simplicity.

His movies and photographs are testaments to the way he engages directly with these topics and themes that preoccupy him. At the end all of these

turn into images that raise haunting questions in the mind of the viewer. He subjects all elements of 'classical tragedy', his fundamental source of inspiration, to the test of fictional accounts, the utter banality of popular perception and to the judgment of contemporary reality.

At times Ceylan's films run as a succession of still frames rather than a flow of images that move. The director confesses to "not feeling in the cinema the same impact as he gets from some paintings he comes across in a museum or even in a book." Because "it is something else."

That thing is the feeling of "awe" that cinema rarely inspires in the audience. And it is the singularity and beauty of this very state of "awe" that constitutes the spiritual essence of Ceylan's movies. Indeed as a Director Ceylan is aware of the speed fetishism of contemporary cinema and justifies the existence of long plans in his works as "Giving more time to the individual to use his own imagination."

Just like Dostoyevsky or Goethe, both of whom he frequently alludes to, Ceylan is a moviemaker who takes nourishment from the very discomfort of existence. Otherwise, he would not be able to hear, see or tell. As a result his soul has a fixation on what is melancholic and pessimistic.

That fixation defines the mood of his films in their pace, their colors and their immobility. That mood in turn is the mood of the province overshadowed by the cosmopolitan center and Ceylan wishes to explore the periphery / province in its physical reality as well as its emotional intensity.

Ceylan once actually dreamed of becoming a photographer for the National Geographic Magazine, but gave up this idea in favor of a "journey to the essence of Man" after a trip to the Himalayas.

This is telling. In a way the vast journeys of intense emotion that his characters engage in regardless of their class, age or level of intimacy are nearly a copy, a faint picture of or perhaps, a metaphor for an individual's physical journey into nature.



Both these efforts, perhaps the emotional one more intensely so, are solitary acts.

And Ceylan is a solitary figure.

This is why he may be loved passionately but cannot be had. The promise of a pluralistic, curious, humane, mortal and universal feeling of freedom in his films renders him elusive, impossible to possess or control.

Yet, his work, like one's solitude can be shared. And to do this, you will have to sink yourself into the seat where he sat previously, settle for the Platonic light and view the world through his eyes. Ceylan's films end suddenly but the lives Ceylan cuts off when the projector stops, actually continue within you.

The recognition by the Cannes jury this year of his craftsmanship is a recognition also that his 'beautiful and lonely' visual stories from Turkey, are tales of the modern and tragic global condition of humanity. What is paradoxical in this award for directing is that after all his films are all about the uncontrolled, unpredictable nature of our destinies; they are stories about how our personal universes, no matter how hard we try cannot be directed or commanded.

In Ceylan's universe there are no surprises. Except perhaps that the imminent mortality of his characters is what generated the immortal artistic legacy of his work.

My Religious Upbringing (?)

I was four when I met religion. My parents took me to the seat of the Greek Orthodox Church in Istanbul. I was led to the presence of a man dressed in black robes with a big white beard. When my turn came, I did as the others and kissed the hand of the Archbishop.

It seems curious that in a predominantly Muslim country, in a city that is home to many marvelous mosques my first awareness of religion was through the then Archbishop Athenagoras. However, my story is not that different from the other children I grew up with. Our parents, the first generation of the Republic, did not practice religion. They were the bureaucratic elite, doctors, engineers, lawyers, academics... Our birth certificates had Islam written next to religion, but it meant no more to us than the name of the district where our birth was registered.

From my childhood I have an image of someone praying in a house that we had visited. I found the prostrating motions accompanied by mumbling bizarre and a bit eerie. I finally met religion in a more formal sense in Ankara when in third grade we took a course on Islam. We memorized a prayer or two. This was no different than memorizing poems about Atatürk- prayers and poems equally distant, both a tedious part of enforced school life.

I was 11 when Islamic identity was given to me. Not in Turkey but in Boston where I went to sixth grade. From abroad the US was a country with cowboys and Indians; every child had a bicycle and blond girls my age even kissed their boyfriends. What I did not expect was a school day that began not only with a salute to a flag, but also with prayers. A student read a passage from the Bible, then the class recited the Lord's prayer. My teacher didn't want me to feel excluded. She bought a copy of the Koran. The school days now began with a reading of the Bible *and* the Koran. In the eyes of the school and for the first time in my life, I was a Muslim.

I returned to Turkey to attend Robert Academy which once more brought me to a secular setting, albeit grounded in Judeo-Christian culture. The Book of Job impressed us all. We were titillated with the Song of Solomon, appreciated Greek mythology, studied Western literature filled with biblical allusions. It never crossed our minds or the minds of our educators for the Koran to be studied as literature. Islamic culture was for closed minds and backward people.

In 1964, after high school I worked as a social worker in Germany. I traveled from factory to lodging, construction site to hospital, meeting Turks from all parts of Anatolia. Separated from their families and homes, what held them together was their sense of religion. In the same sense that I had experienced America as a Christian country I now saw the Turks as a Muslim people. They were not the people I knew while growing up in Istanbul and Ankara.

Since then fifty years have passed... In the course of that time my experience with Islam has followed a zigzag course, a consequence of both my personal development and political events.

As a university student in Washington in the late '60s I was a participant in the anti-war movement. At the same time, I did something that would have shocked my parents and their generation. My Turkish girlfriend and I reinforced our national identity by fasting, for the first time in our lives, a few days during Ramadan. Our anti-imperialism meshed with flirting with a religious identity.

In the 70s I was back in Ankara for my Ph.D. Those were violent times. The killing of students or colleagues became routine. At the

funeral services in the mosques, it was the faithful who prayed for them. We did not know how to pray so we stood slightly apart from the congregation. I now saw religion not just as faith but also an integral part of our daily life and intellectual thought. I was pulled by contradictory forces, the effect of which I feel even more today. My sense of secularism based on the separation of church and state rebelled when I realized that the Turkish state feared religion, controlled it through an elaborate bureaucracy. The government not only employed imams as civil servants but also determined the contents of their sermons in mosques. I was further appalled with the realization that it was only Sunni Muslims who were promoted by the state.

But then, when I read the New York Times today or listen to the White House, I am struck by the fact that they now call Turkey an Islamic democracy. Many Turks have also assumed this identity.

Why?... The answer lies in many factors including the politicization of Islam in the cold war, stringent state control over religion, a cultural rejection of Western values often associated with decadence.

At the height of the cold war, whenever there was a call for more democracy, it was either the military or the mosque that brutally crushed such movements. Thus, many of us experienced Islam in Turkey as a reactionary force and a political movement. It was not long before religious elements in society organized themselves as a political party. To my horror, I saw crowds cheering in Ankara, as a motorcade passed, with the head of the Islamic party waving a piece of cardboard in the shape of a key... the key suggesting the gates of heaven would be opened if we followed him.

But then, I supported that same Islamic party when it joined forces with a center left party to form a government. I also sympathized with the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran when Humeyni overthrew the Shah, a symbol of repression if there ever was one. Did we have an inferiority complex not only with the West but with Soviet or Chinese forms of Marxism too when we thought another road was possible to a better future? Did we feel Islam was pure and innocent while the West became decadent and arrogant? Possibly.

Thus our perception of Islam had changed once more. We vacillated between being proud of Islam and embarrassed by it. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, the consensus in the West was that Islam was fighting for freedom.

The same perception was reinforced when another Islamic party in Turkey, with seemingly greater resolve than previous governments, pushed for membership in the EU. Once more democratic and Islamic forces seemed to have come together. But then, with incremental incidents, some of them violent, we began to witness the transformation of the public space into that of an Islamic community. This led to a staunch resistance expressed through mass rallies in major cities.

Where do I fit in?

I live on one of the Prince's Islands. Last year I took the morning ferry to Istanbul. With no time for breakfast I grabbed a "*simit*" before getting on. Settling on my seat I took a bite. It was Ramadan. I felt uneasy. No one said anything or gave me a disapproving look. Yet, I felt I could be upsetting those who might be fasting. More out of courtesy than fear, I put the *simit* away. Religion had yet taken on another meaning and for the first time intervened with my daily life.

Gündüz Vassaf is the author, most recently, of Türkiye Sen Kimsin?

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