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Die Türkei träumt von goldenen Zeiten - in ferner Zukunft



Welt am Sonntag, 04.10.2009

Kein anderes gewichtiges Land hat die Krise härter getroffen. Doch die Regierung will sich nicht helfen lassen und vertraut auf die eigene Kraft - ob das reicht?

Als Partystadt wird Istanbul in den Reiseführern gern verkauft. Und die Feierlaune ist scheinbar ungetrübt: Dicht drängen sich europäische Blazer-Träger auf der Touristenmeile Istiklal Caddesi zwischen Restaurants und dröhnenden Clubs. Auch im mit Souvenirs vollgestopften Laden von Ali Ajacan geht es eng zu. Junge arabische Frauen und kanadische Seniorinnen interessieren sich für gehäkelte Wandbilder, riesige Porzellanvasen und bemalte Schiefertafeln.

Doch fragt man Ali Ajacan nach dem Gang seiner Geschäfte, druckst er herum und streicht über seinen struppigen grauen Vollbart. Man solle sich nicht täuschen lassen, sagt er. "Zwar kommen heute kaum weniger Touristen als vor zwei Jahren - aber jeder von ihnen gibt viel weniger Geld aus." Die Wirtschaftskrise treffe seine kleine Kette "Dynasty Gift Shops" hart.

Ajacan zeigt auf die Koffer in seinem Angebot. Früher hätten sich die Besucher für Markenware interessiert. "Jetzt wollen sie nur noch die billigen Taschen haben - wenn überhaupt." Ein Kunde, der vor zwei Jahren noch 200 Euro ausgegeben hätte, lasse heute im Schnitt noch 50 Euro bei ihm. Und auch wenn er das so offen nicht sagen will: Ewig hält er das nicht durch.

Es sind kleine Läden wie der von Ajacan, die das Straßenbild Istanbul ebenso prägen wie die türkische Wirtschaft. In den vergangenen acht Monaten mussten allein an der türkischen Riviera über 2600 kleine Unternehmen aufgeben. Das Rückgrat der Ökonomie bekommt die Krise besonders hart zu spüren, und das trifft die ganze Wirtschaft ins Mark. Nach einer Berechnung der Deka-Bank ist die Wirtschaft, vergleicht man das stärkste Quartal vor und das schwächste nach der Krise, so stark eingebrochen wie in keinem anderen gewichtigen Land der Welt. Jüngst hat die Regierung ihre Prognose für die Entwicklung der Wirtschaftsleistung 2009 nochmals nach unten korrigiert - auf minus sechs Prozent.

Das Seltsame ist: Auch wenn viele kleinere Unternehmen unter der Krise leiden und sich beklagen, dass die Hilfen der Regierung nur bei den Großunternehmen landen, herrscht nicht die Krisenstimmung im Land, die man erwarten würde.

Das liegt weniger daran, dass die Türken Konjunkturausreißer aus der Vergangenheit gewöhnt sind. Der Grund ist ein anderer: "Die Türkei erlebt erstmals eine Rezession, die nicht hausgemacht ist", sagt Josef Pöschl, Türkei-Experte am Wiener Institut für Internationale Wirtschaftsvergleiche. Auch laut Deka-Bank Chefvolkswirt Ulrich Kater ist die Türkei gut aufgestellt. So sei das Bankensystem recht stabil. Der Grund für den Einbruch käme aus dem Ausland: "Von dort versiegen die Kapitalströme."

Noch vor sieben Jahren floss nur eine Milliarde Dollar aus dem Ausland in die Türkei, 2007 waren es über 19 Milliarden. Das schob die Konjunktur mächtig an und machte gleichzeitig die Wirtschaft stark abhängig vom Ausland - was sich rächte, als die Finanzkrise ausbrach. "Die globale Kreditklemme kam genau zu dem Zeitpunkt, als wir Geld brauchten", sagte Finanzminister Mehmet Simsek am Freitag im Interview mit der "Welt".

Das Problem: Da die Türkei ein relativ schlechtes Rating vorweist, kann sie sich nicht so leicht Geld am Kreditmarkt beschaffen. Der Internationale Währungsfonds (IWF) wollte ihr deshalb mit einem Kredit aushelfen, 34 Milliarden Euro waren im Gespräch. Das aber lehnte die Regierung ab. Offiziell lautet die Begründung, dass die Reformen, die der IWF im Land anstoßen wollte, längst auf dem Weg seien - wohl nur die halbe Wahrheit.

Weil Steuerbetrug in der Türkei an der Tagesordnung ist, drängte der IWF die Regierung, eine Steueraufsichtsbehörde zu schaffen. Das aber lehnte die Regierung scharf ab. Denn dann wäre es schwieriger, aus der Zahl der Steuersünder - und das sind fast alle - jene herauszupicken, die man abstrafen möchte, wie etwa zurzeit den Medienkonzern Dogan.

Vom Tisch ist die Hilfe aber nicht: "Wir werden mit der türkischen Regierung diskutieren, ob eine Unterstützung durch den IWF hilfreich wäre", sagte Währungsfonds-Chef Dominique Strauss-Kahn diese Woche zu Beginn der IWF-Jahrestagung in Istanbul. Auch Weltbank-Präsident Robert Zoellick machte indirekt Werbung für einen Kredit: "Schwellenländer wie Mexiko, Indien oder die Türkei können die weltweite Nachfrage deutlich ankurbeln - sofern sie die nötigen finanziellen Mittel zur Verfügung gestellt bekommen."

Die Türkei will aber erst einmal versuchen, sich selbst aus der Krise zu ziehen. "Die Regierung hat eine Menge zur Stabilisierung der Wirtschaft getan", sagt Pöschl. Sie senkte temporär die Mehrwertsteuer und übernimmt den Arbeitgeberanteil an der Sozialversicherung für bis zu sieben Jahre. Auf Investitionen fallen dank großzügiger Abschreibungsregeln so gut wie keine Steuern an. Um 3,5 Prozent soll die Wirtschaft 2010 so wachsen. Ob die Maßnahmen wirken und nicht zu noch höheren Steuerausfällen führen, so dass der IWF doch noch einschreiten muss, bleibt abzuwarten.

"Wir sind überzeugt, dass diese Maßnahmen die Auslandsinvestitionen wieder steigen lassen werden", sagt Alpaslan Korkmaz von der Investment Support and Promotion Agency of Turkey. Sie werden auch dringend gebraucht: Nur wenn die türkische Wirtschaft jährlich in hohem Tempo wächst, kann sie ihr größtes Problem in den Griff kriegen: die hohe Arbeitslosigkeit.

Derzeit liegt die Quote bei 14 Prozent, bei den Jugendlichen stand fast jeder Vierte im Juni ohne Job da. Das Problem: 60 Prozent der Arbeitslosen sind gering qualifiziert. Nur wenn es gelingt, die Arbeitskräfte besser auszubilden, hat das Land die goldene Zukunft vor sich, von der Ökonomen ausgehen. Eine junge, wachsende Bevölkerung mit steigender Kaufkraft - kein anderes Land in Europa hat solche Voraussetzungen.

2050 könne die Türkei neuntgrößte Volkswirtschaft der Welt sein, prognostiziert Goldman Sachs.

Ali Ajacan hofft, dass seine Kunden aus dem Ausland bald wieder mehr kaufen und die "Dynasty Gift Shops" die Krise überstehen. Das verheißungsvolle Ziel hat er vor Augen. Das Hotel gegenüber seinem Laden verspricht schon, was er sich für die Zukunft wünscht: Es trägt den Namen "Golden Age".

TÜRKİYE PARLAK DÖNEMLERİN HAYALİNİ KURUYOR

"Dynasty Gift Shops" adlı hediyelik eşya satan dükkânın sahibi esnaf Ali Ajacan son zamanlarda işlerinin eskisi gibi canlı olmadığından yakınıyor ve 2 yıl önce dükkanına giren ve 200 avro harcayan müşterilerin artık sadece 50 avro harcadıklarını belirtiyor. İstanbul'daki küçük esnaf zor durumda. Son 8 ay içinde Ege ve Akdeniz sahillerinde küçük çaptaki 2 bin 600 dükkân kepenklerini indirmek zorunda kaldı.

DEKA-Bank yetkilileri, küresel ekonomik krizden ülkenin oldukça ağır bir şekilde etkilendiğini belirtiyor. Türk hükûmeti, büyüme rakamlarını en son yüzde 6 olarak açıkladı.

Türkiye'de ilginç olan, -her ne kadar küçük esnaf devlet yardımlarının büyük şirketlere dağıtıldığından yakınsa da- ülkede kriz ortamının beklenildiği kadar hissedilmemesidir. Viyana Uluslararası Ekonomi Karşılaştırmaları Enstitüsü uzmanı Josef Pöschl, Türkiye'de ilk defa kendilerinden kaynaklanan bir resesyon yaşanmadığını hatırlatıyor. DEKA-Bank yetkilisi Ulrich Kater de krize rağmen, ülkedeki bankacılık sektörünün sağlam olduğunu vurguluyor.

Yedi yıl önce sadece 1 milyar dolar yabancı sermayenin girdiği Türkiye'ye, 2007 yılında 19 milyar dolardan fazla sermaye girmiştir. Son olarak Uluslararası Para Fonunun (İMF) ülkeye 34 milyarlık bir kredi vermesi söz konusuydu. Hükûmet, bu krediyi kullanmak istemedi. Resmî olarak yapılan açıklamada, İMF'nin reform taleplerinin zaten karşılanmak üzere olduğundan söz edildi. Bu açıklama, tam olarak gerçekleri yansıtmıyor olsa gerek.

İMF'nin Türk hükûmetine bir vergi denetleme biriminin kurulması yönünde baskı yaptığı ve hükûmetin buna karşı koyduğu söyleniyor. Bu durumda hükûmetin Doğan Medya gibi vergi kaçırıanları cezalandırmasının zorlaşabileceğinden söz ediliyor.

Buna rağmen İstanbul'da yapılan İMF yıllık toplantısında Strauss-Kahn, Türkiye'ye kredi verilmesi konusunu hükûmetle görüşeceklerini açıkladı. Ancak Türkiye öncelikle kendi gücü ve imkânlarıyla krizden çıkmak istiyor. Viyana Uluslararası Ekonomi Karşılaştırmaları Enstitüsü uzmanı Josef Pöschl, hükûmetin bu konuda birtakım ekonomik önlemler aldığını ve 2010 yılı için yüzde 3,5'lik bir büyüme öngördüğünü belirtiyor.

"Investment Support and Promotion Agency of Turkey" adlı yatırım şirketinin yetkilisi Alpaslan Korkmaz, hükûmetin aldığı önlemler sayesinde yabancı sermayenin yeniden ülkeye akacağına inandıklarını söylüyor. Ülkenin en büyük sorunu olan

İşsizliğin ancak ekonominin hızla büyümesi hâlinde önlenmesi mümkündür. Türkiye'de şu sıralarda işsizlik yüzde 14 civarındadır.

"Goldman Sachs" adlı banka yetkilileri, dinamik ve genç bir nüfusa sahip Türkiye'nin, 2050 yılında dünyanın en büyük dokuz ekonomisi arasında yer alacağı öngörüsünde bulunuyor.

Türkei: „EU-Beitritt 2015 wäre zu spät“

Die Presse
FREI SEIT 1848

Die Presse, 04.10.2009

Außenminister Ahmet Davutoglu übt scharfe Kritik an Zypern und will keine Sanktionen gegen den Iran. Davutoglu begründete dies mit dem Schaden, der der Türkei durch das Embargo gegen Saddam Husseins Irak entstanden ist.

BRÜSSEL. Der türkische Außenminister Ahmet Davutoglu hat am Freitag die EU dazu aufgefordert, die Beitrittsverhandlungen mit der Türkei zu beschleunigen. „Ich möchte als Politiker von den Visionen zur Realität kommen. Insofern ist nicht nur ein türkischer Beitritt im Jahr 2050, sondern bereits im Jahr 2015 zu spät“, erklärte Davutoglu bei einer Veranstaltung der Denkfabrik European Policy Centre in Brüssel.

Gleichzeitig kritisierte er die Regierung Südzyporns, weil sie in den Verhandlungen über die Wiedervereinigung mit dem türkischen, international als Staat nicht anerkannten Norden der Insel nur zögerliche Vorschläge für mehr Autonomie für die zypriotischen Türken mache. „Warum teilen die griechischen Zyprioten ihre politischen Rechte nicht mit den türkischen Zyprioten? Das ist die ethische Frage“, sagte der seit Mai amtierende Außenminister.

Ankara verlangt von EU Respekt

Solange die Zypern-Frage nicht gelöst ist, wird die Türkei nicht EU-Mitglied werden. Die türkische Regierung ist sehr verbittert über das Vorgehen der EU, die Südzypern 2004 als Mitglied aufgenommen hat, obwohl die griechischen Zyprioten einen von der EU unterstützten Vereinigungsplan ablehnten, dem die türkischen Zyprioten bereits zugestimmt hatten. Als Vergeltungsmaßnahme gewährt die Türkei seither südzypriotischen Schiffen und Flugzeugen keinen Zugang zu ihren See- und Flughäfen.

Allerdings geht es derzeit und wohl auch in den Jahren über 2015 hinaus nicht darum, ob und wann genau die Türkei Mitglied der Union wird, sondern darum, über die Bedingungen dieses Beitritts zu verhandeln. Mehrere EU-Staaten, allen voran Frankreich, drängen seit einiger Zeit darauf, Ankara eine „besondere Partnerschaft“ anzubieten. Ankara will aber eine Vollmitgliedschaft. „Wir werden alle europäischen Führer stets daran erinnern, dass der Grundsatz ‚Pacta sunt

servanda' (,Verträge sind einzuhalten', Anm. d. Red.) Basis der europäischen Werte sind. Ohne Respekt und Selbstverpflichtung sind sie wertlos“, sagte er.

Gegen Iran-Embargo

Der Außenminister erklärte weiters, dass die Türkei Wirtschaftssanktionen gegen den Iran, um ihn vom Bau der Atombombe abzubringen, nicht mittragen würde. „Wir wollen kein nuklear bewaffnetes Land in unserer Nachbarschaft – weder im Iran noch sonstwo. Dagegen muss man Diplomatie, Diplomatie, Diplomatie einsetzen.“ Davutoğlu begründete dies mit dem Schaden, der der Türkei durch das Embargo gegen Saddam Husseins Irak entstanden ist.

2015 YILI AB ÜYELİĞİ İÇİN ÇOK GEÇ

Türkiye Dışışleri Bakanı Ahmet Davutoğlu, Türkiye ile üyelik görüşmelerini hızlandırması konusunda cuma günü Avrupa Birliği'ne bir talepte bulundu. Brüksel'deki düşünce kuruluşu Avrupa Politika Merkezinin Türkiye İş Adamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu (TUSKON) ile ortaklaşa düzenlediği toplantıya katılan Davutoğlu, "Ben bir siyasetçi olarak hayal aleminden gerçekliğe geçmek istiyorum. Bu açıdan, değil 2050, 2015 yılı bile Türkiye'nin üyeliğe kabulü için çok geç." diye konuştu.

Aynı zamanda, Ada'nın uluslararası boyutta ülke olarak kabul edilmeyen Türk kesimi ile yeniden barış müzakerelerinde Kıbrıslı Türklerin daha fazla özerk olması konusunda kararsız öneriler sunduğunu belirterek, Güney Kıbrıs hükûmetini de eleştiren Davutoğlu, "Kıbrıslı Rumlar, siyasi haklarını Kıbrıslı Türklerle neden paylaşmak istemiyor? Bu etik bir sorudur." diyerek konuşmasını tamamladı.

Ankara Hükûmeti AB'den Saygı Bekliyor

Kıbrıs sorunu çözüme kavuşmadıkça Türkiye'nin AB üyesi olması beklenemez. Türkiye hükûmeti, Avrupa Birliği tarafından desteklenen ve Kıbrıs Türklerinin onaylamış olduğu barış planını kabul etmemelerine rağmen, 2004 yılında Güney Kıbrıs kesimini üyeliğine kabul eden Avrupa Birliği'nin bu tutumundan rahatsız. O tarihten bu yana Türkiye misilleme olarak, Güney Kıbrıs gemi ve uçaklarının Türk deniz ve hava limanlarından geçişini yasakladı.

Ayrıca, ne şimdi ne de 2015 sonrasında söz konusu olan şey, ne Türkiye'nin üye olup olamayacağı ne de ne zaman üyeliğe kabul edileceği değil, bu üyelik koşullarının görüşülmesidir. Başta Fransa olmak üzere, birçok AB-üyesi ülke, Ankara hükûmetine "imtiyazlı ortaklık" teklifi konusunda bir süredir ısrar ediyor. Fakat Ankara tam üyelik istiyor. Davutoğlu konuşmasını "Bütün Avrupa liderlerine 'Pacta sunt servanda' ('Sözleşmelere Uyulacaktır') ilkesinin Avrupai değerlerin temelini oluşturduğunu daima hatırlatacağız. Saygı ve öz sorumluluk olmazsa bunun bir değeri kalmaz." şeklinde sürdürdü.

İran Ambargosuna Karşı

Dışışleri Bakanı, atom bombası üretme kararından vazgeçirmek için Türkiye'nin İran'a ekonomik yaptırım uygulamayacağını açıkladı. Davutoğlu, "Ne İran ne de başka bir komşu ülkenin nükleer silahlarla donanmış olmasını istiyoruz. Buna karşı diplomasi

uygulamak gerekir." diye vurguladı. Davutoğlu, Saddam Hüseyin'e karşı Irak'a uygulanan ambargonun Türkiye'ye verdiği zararı buna sebep gösterdi.

Turkey's Shift to a More Open Economy



Spiegel International, 05.10.2009

By Stanley Reed

Applying for European Union membership has sped up the reform process in Turkey. And that has helped the country survive the current economic crisis.

Turkey cannot escape the ravages of the global recession. But this time it may avoid the pains that often afflict this promising country in a downturn. For the Turks, a recession usually goes like this: A wild boom triggers high inflation, the currency collapses, and the poorly managed banking sector, hooked on speculative trading and foreign debt, has a near-death experience. Turkey has a well-educated workforce, proximity to Europe, and a shrewd management class. But financial fragility, including a meltdown that sparked riots in 2001, has kept it from entering the first rank of emerging market economies.

In the current turmoil, to everyone's amazement, things have been different. The economy has been dealt a body blow as exports have stalled. While structural problems still exist, in both the political and regulatory spheres, the financial system has held firm even as U.S. and European banks have hovered on the brink. "This is the first recession in which we didn't have a crisis," says Murat Ülgen, chief economist at HSBC in Istanbul. Credit goes to reforms, backed by the International Monetary Fund, that curbed inflation and forced banks to bolster their balance sheets. The increased presence of foreign banks also spurred locals to improve their game. Most important, Turkey has welcomed investment and stepped up efforts to become a real player in the global economy.

Enforced EU Discipline

This change in attitude has raised Turkey in the eyes of multinationals. Foreign direct investment surged from \$1.1 billion in 2001 to \$22 billion in 2007, before dropping back to \$18 billion in 2008. Even though the figure is expected to fall to \$9.1 billion this year, executives seem confident Turkey will bounce back. With a population of 76 million, Turkey is an attractive consumer market, and all those youthful workers at Europe's doorstep have turned the country into a workshop for export industries such as cars, aerospace, appliances, and textiles. "We put Turkey in the same category as Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa," says Ali Faramawy, a vice-president of Microsoft International in Istanbul. Microsoft's software sales in Turkey are growing at 20 percent to 30 percent a year. "It's not difficult to see Microsoft Turkey doubling in size in a relatively short time," Faramawy adds.

Two things have made Turkey more of a player. The enforced discipline of applying for European Union membership has worked wonders. And Prime Minister Recep

Tayyip Erdogan, who has headed a moderately Islamist government since 2003, has pushed largely pro-business policies. Building on the ideas of Kemal Dervis, the former World Bank official who took charge of the Turkish economy during the 2001 crisis, Erdogan has slashed corporate taxes, tightened intellectual property protections, and set up an investment promotion agency. He also launched Turkey's EU negotiations. While the talks have been tortuous, they have pressured Turkey to make changes in a wide range of areas—from improving women's rights to easing protectionist policies. "The whole EU process affects business positively," says Umran Beba, Istanbul-based president of PepsiCo for Southeast Europe.

As Turkey shifts from an inward-looking economy to a more open one, local business leaders realize they will need to remake their companies to meet increasing competition. That will require investment in technology and communications, creating a big opening for companies from IBM to Cisco Systems to Google. Eray Yuksek, general manager for IBM in Turkey, figures that, excluding telecom, Turkish companies are spending only about \$2 billion on information technology. "That's nothing, nothing" in a country with an economy of Turkey's size. "It's a huge opportunity for us," he says.

'Staging Ground'

Other areas of the Turkish market beckon. In 2005, General Electric spent \$1.75 billion for 25 percent of GarantiBank. It now leads the Turkish loan market in most categories and is reporting 3.5 percent nonperforming loans, below Turkey's industry average of 4.5 percent. GE's now 21 percent share is worth \$3.4 billion. The company has a venture that makes aircraft engine components, and it's opening a facility to supply locomotives for Europe.

Turkey's trump card is its location. You can sense that Turkey, and especially Istanbul, is at a crossroads by spending an evening at one of the ancient city's exquisite restaurants along the Bosphorus, the glowing ribbon of water that separates Asia and Europe. The country is not just close to Europe but also to the former Soviet Union and the Middle East. The area from the Balkans to Kazakhstan has the potential to be fast-growing for years to come. Ferdinando Beccalli-Falco, Brussels-based CEO of GE International, sees Turkey as a "staging ground" for penetrating the region. Yesim Toduk, founder of Istanbul executive search firm Amrop International, says she spends much of her time finding Turks to work for companies in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Saudi Arabia.

Investment flows from the East as well. The United Arab Emirates-based Oger Telecom, controlled by Lebanon's Hariri family, owns 55 percent of Turk Telekom, the fixed-line operator. Kuwaiti Finance House, an Islamic bank, has set up Kuveyt Turk to pursue Islamic banking. Investment firms that mainly channel Gulf money, including Dubai-based Abraaj Capital, which owns a Turkish hospital chain, are active in the country. Middle Eastern investment has soared to a cumulative \$6.3 billion since 2004.

This year, though, both multinational and Turkish companies had a rough time. Aynur Bektas, the owner of Hey Tekstil, a textile concern with 4,000 employees, coped by ramping up production 25 percent, trimming prices, and doubling her customer base.

Turkey's textile industry has been slammed, but her sales are up 10 percent. "Others were not so well prepared," she says.

Recovery Will Take Time

When export demand slumped, Turkish consumers took up some of the slack. The government introduced a Buy Turkish program, including tax incentives, to encourage Turks to open their wallets. That benefited Arcelik, a unit of Koc Group, Turkey's largest conglomerate. The company churns out 12,000 washing machines a day in a factory in the sunbaked industrial town of Cayirova, an hour's drive from Istanbul. In January and February, output fell to 60 percent of capacity as demand for washers plummeted in Europe. "Those were the worst months. Now it's coming back," says production manager Alp Karahasanoglu. Production is up 20 percent since February, and he is planning for expansion. The plant will make about 2.3 million machines this year, but that will grow to 4 million units as export markets recover, he predicts.

Recovery will take time. The Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development predicts growth of 2.6 percent in 2010, after a 5.9 percent plunge in gross domestic product this year. Still, the Istanbul Stock Exchange is up 77 percent this year, and the lira has climbed 23 percent against the dollar since March.

One factor affecting investor confidence in the economy is the Prime Minister himself. Some Turks worry about the Islamist roots of his Justice & Development Party. The fear among secularists is that Erdogan wants to turn Turkey into a version of Saudi Arabia, forcing women to stay at home and banning alcohol. If that is his goal, Erdogan has a long way to go in Istanbul. While some women wear head scarves, plenty don't. And at night the alleyways of central Istanbul are crowded with tables of young people quaffing mugs of Efes beer.

Stable Long-Term Finances

Critics also complain that Erdogan has slowed the pace of reform. And investors were shocked when the government recently fined Dogan Yayin, Turkey's largest media group, \$2.5 billion for back taxes and penalties. The company's publications have criticized Erdogan in the past. Another cause for anxiety: taxes. The tax regime hits some industries, such as telecom, harder than others, while half of wage earners aren't legally registered and don't pay taxes. That puts multinationals that play by the rules at a disadvantage to local rivals. "The tax system is a disaster," says A. Rahsan Cebe, managing partner of Cushman & Wakefield in Turkey and chairman of the lobby group American Business Forum in the country. Some businesspeople also think Erdogan should negotiate a new loan with the IMF, which would stabilize long-term finances.

Still, most observers are betting that moderation will prevail and Turkey will stay on a reform path. Adem Dogan, a 27-year-old Istanbul plumber, sees a bright future. He has expanded his business by spending \$400 a month to advertise on Google. Says Dogan: "Before we had 100 customers, now we have 2,500."

Turkey set to re-establish ties with Armenia



Deutsche Welle, 06.10.2009

It's one of Europe's longest-running disputes, but the icy relations between Turkey and Armenia could be thawing out. Turkey has said an agreement to re-establish diplomatic ties with Armenia will be signed on Saturday.

Ana, a nanny for a Turkish family in Istanbul, is one of thousands of Armenians forced to look for work abroad because of Turkey's trade embargo against Armenia. She says life in Istanbul is hard, because of the closed frontier between the two nations.

"We are illegal and earn very little money, and you always have to avoid the police as you could be arrested at any time and deported," she said.

Ana was overjoyed at the news that Turkey was prepared to re-establish ties with Armenia. In 1993, Turkey severed ties and closed its border after Armenia fought a war with Turkish ally Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno Karabakh enclave.

"I can't wait for the embargo to be lifted," she said. "It will change everything, for both our countries. We just want peace and normalcy."

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said that a protocol will be signed on October 10, which will normalize bilateral relations between Turkey and Armenia. But some experts caution that, while it's an important gesture, it's only the first step.

"It's pretty significant, but then the protocols will be sent to the respective parliaments for ratification and that's when the deal gets a bit more complicated, as there is strong opposition both in Armenia and Turkey," said Soli Ozel, an expert on international relations at Istanbul's Bilgi University.

Critics say deal betrays Azerbaijan

Turkey's main opposition parties have condemned the announcement, accusing the government of betraying its ally Azerbaijan. Armenian forces also continue to occupy a large part of Azeri territory. The government has been quick to dispel accusations of betrayal, saying it remains committed to Azerbaijan. Suat Kiniklioglu, spokesman of the Turkish parliament's foreign affairs committee, insisted earlier this month that resolving Azeri grievances remains key to restoring Armenian-Turkish relations.

"Without movement on the Karabakh issue, the normalization process would be difficult to sustain. All the stars really do have to be aligned," Kiniklioglu said.

Ozel says the alignment is right, however, because for the first time since the conflict, major powers have a common interest in bringing stability to the region.

"My understanding is that there is almost near agreement on a framework between Azerbaijan and Armenia," Ozel said. "The Americans are behind these developments, but Russia's role is more important because the Russians can block it anytime they want. But I think it serves their purpose too, because Russian and American relations seem to be on a better track now. The Russians may wish to be on the right side of things."

Russian support is key

Such a diplomatic breakthrough in resolving the seemingly intractable dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan will be crucial if the government is to sell the opening of the Armenian border to its people. On the streets of Istanbul, for example, there remains suspicion of Armenia and widespread support for Azerbaijan, even among supporters of restoring diplomatic relations with Armenia.

A historical controversy between Armenia and Turkey could yet undermine attempts to re-establish ties. Many in the international community accuse Turkey's then-Ottoman rulers of committing genocide against its Armenian minority between 1915 and 1923. Ankara strongly denies the charge. The controversy continues to sour relations and add to the deep suspicion within the country over the rapprochement.

"This discourse about genocide is being imposed on us by great Western powers; that's why the debate about opening the border is not a simple question, for anybody," said political scientist and newspaper columnist, Nuray Mert. "The political opposition, knowing that it is a very sensitive issue, is using it against the government so that the issue is becoming even more complicated."

The message to Ankara from both Washington and Brussels is: forget about the opposition and open the border. But with critics of the deal in all political circles increasingly voicing their opposition, that's easier said than done, many analysts say. Erdogan will have to brace himself for a tough fight if he is to convince Turks that they are betraying neither a key ally, or themselves.

Gül: Türkischer Verzicht auf EU-Beitritt möglich

Süddeutsche Zeitung

Süddeutsche Zeitung, 08.10.2009Die Türkei könnte nach Worten ihres Präsidenten Abdullah Gül nach Abschluss erfolgreicher Beitrittsverhandlungen mit der EU letztlich auf den Vollzug des Schrittes verzichten. Wenn die für den EU-Beitritt nötigen Reformen verwirklicht seien, werde die Türkei ein völlig anderes Land sein als heute, sagte Gül dem Pariser Blatt *Le Figaro* "Vielleicht wird diese Türkei dann die Zweifel der Franzosen und anderer überwinden. Oder die Türken wollen vielleicht Europa nicht mehr; vielleicht ziehen sie den von Norwegen gewählten Weg vor."

Norwegens Bevölkerung hatte 1972 und 1994 den bereits ausgehandelten Beitritt zur Europäischen Union per Volksentscheid gestoppt.

TÜRKİYE AB ÜYELİĞİNİ İSTEMEYEBİLİR

Cumhurbaşkanı Abdullah Gül'ün söylediğine göre, Türkiye, Avrupa Birliği ile katılım müzakerelerini başarıyla tamamladıktan sonra, üyelikten feragat edebilir. Fransa'da yayımlanan Figaro gazetesine verdiği mülakatta, AB üyeliği için gereken reformlar gerçekleşikten sonra Türkiye'nin bugünkünden çok farklı bir ülke olacağını kaydeden Gül, "Belki o günkü Türkiye, Fransızlar'ın ve diğerlerinin kuşkularını ortadan kaldırır ya da belki Türkler o zaman Avrupa'yı istemez, Norveç'in izlediği yolu seçer." ifadesini kullandı. Norveçliler, 1972 ve 1994 yılında müzakereleri tamamlanan AB üyeliğini halk oylamasıyla durdurmuşlardı. Ülke buna rağmen AB'ye yakından bağlı. AB iç piyasası yasaları büyük ölçüde Norveç'te uygulanıyor ve ülke sınır kontrollerinin yapılmadığı Schengen alanı dahilinde.

Brüksel ile katılım müzakerelerinin Ankara'nın "durumunu iyileştirmesi ve Avrupa standartlarına ulaşması" olanağı sağlayacağını söyleyen Gül, "Ancak AB ile ilgili iş bize düşüyor. Türkiye kendini değiştirmek zorunda." dedi. Gül'e göre, süreç kısa vadede zor olmakla birlikte, uzun vadede avantajlı olacak. Federal Almanya Başbakanı Merkel de tıpkı Fransa gibi Türkiye'nin AB ile ayrıcalıklı ortaklığa gitmesini önermişti. Ankara'daki hükûmet ise şimdiye dek sürekli olarak sadece tam üyeliği müzakere edeceğini açıkladı.