

H. Tarýk Oguzlu

The changing Turkish approach towards the European Union after 9/11

For over thirty years, Turkey has sought membership in what is today called the European Union (EU). This article argues that the most likely scenario to reach that goal is that Ankara will speed up its efforts to meet the EU's membership criteria, and that the EU will begin accession talks and later admit Turkey as a member in a reasonable time period. There are two main reasons for this. The first is that Turkey's determination to meet the accession criteria has increased in the post-9/11 era. Today, a growing number of Turkish people concur that meeting the accession criteria, let alone acquiring full membership, will serve Turkey's interests. This is especially true when security considerations are taken into account. The second reason is that the EU itself has started to change its attitude toward Turkey's membership application. An increasing number of EU citizens now believe that the membership of a gradually "Europeanizing" Turkey will be in the EU's interests, mainly defined in terms of security and identity considerations.

H. Tarýk Oguzlu is assistant professor of international relations at Bilkent University, Ankara.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TURKEY'S VIEW OF THE EU UNTIL THE LATE 1990S

Thirty years after the signing of the association agreement, Turkey-EU relations have undergone radical change. Since 1996, Turkey has been in a customs union agreement with the EU and, since late 1999, Turkey has been a membership candidate with full membership ostensibly dependent upon its meeting a set of criteria (i.e., the Copenhagen criteria) that has been applied to all other recent aspirant countries. Since 1999 and following the announcement of Turkey's candidacy, there have been radical developments in EU-Turkey relations. With the accession partnership document and Turkey's national program, Ankara is today closer to the EU than ever before. Turkey and the EU finally solved their dispute over the European security and defence policy (ESDP) in 2002, and the decision adopted at the Copenhagen summit in December 2002 for the first time overtly stated that accession talks with Turkey should start without further delay, provided that the European Commission report of late 2004 recommended this. In the November 2002 elections, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in Ankara, and because of the party's prevailing pro-EU inclinations the pace of reform has also increased, not only in the domestic sphere but also in Turkey's foreign policy practices. Lastly, at the December 2004 Brussels summit, the European Union agreed to start the accession talks with Turkey in October 2005 pending Turkey's prior approval of extending the customs union agreement to the recently admitted 10 EU members, including the Republic of Cyprus.

However promising such developments might appear for achieving Ankara's long-held goal of EU membership, problems remain. First, Turkey's approach towards the EU has traditionally rested on ideological grounds, rather than on a rational cost-benefit analysis. Turkey has long argued that it should be admitted to the union due to its European character. At the same time, the majority of the Turkish elites have believed that to solidify Turkey's European/western/modern identity, EU membership is a must. The problem with such an approach has been that Turkish policymakers have long failed to understand why the EU members hesitated to offer a clear membership prospect to Turkey based on their own cost-benefit calculations.¹ Turkish elites have tended to believe that just as Turkey

¹ Malcom Cooper, "The legacy of Ataturk: Turkish political structures and policymaking," *International Affairs* 78, no. 1 (2002): 115-28.

wants to join the EU on identity related grounds, the EU also adopts the same rationale vis-à-vis Turkey. Rather than believing that the EU's reluctance might emanate from its own cost-benefit calculations with respect to Turkey's admission, Ankara has long believed that the EU does not want Turkey mainly because it sees Turkey as non-European.

Second, the majority of the Turkish elites have long thought that Turkey has the right to join the EU, as article 28 of the 1964 Association treaty vaguely mentions this possibility. Consequently, within this perspective, the main responsibility for Turkey's accession to the union rests with the Europeans. The oft-repeated Turkish argument has been that because the EU members did not offer clear membership timetables to Turkey, the latter did not feel encouraged to go through the painful transformation process. This shows that the Turkish leadership has long indexed EU-related reforms to the possibility that the EU will offer membership status to Turkey. Ankara has tended to argue that the processes of liberalization and democratization should not be tied to (or conceived as a part of) Turkey's EU membership process. However, the close relationship between these processes has nonetheless been assumed.

Third, for Turkey, the EU has mainly been considered an intergovernmental organization. The postsovereign/postnational/postmodern aspects of that organization have been overlooked. This has deprived the Turkish elites of the ability to grasp the identity-transforming characteristics of the EU project, particularly as it evolved in the 1990s. It has also led Ankara to believe that the relationship with Brussels would be equal and symmetric. The EU was considered a significant economic organization in the western international community that is led by the US-NATO, rather than a distinctive international actor with its own evolving identity.²

Fourth, due to its well-established security culture, members of the Turkish military and foreign policy elites have tended to think that their country's integration into the EU was likely because of close strategic security relations with the European powers within NATO. Turkey's geopolitical significance and its military capabilities are believed to enhance Ankara's

2 Meltem Müftüleri-Bac, *Turkey's Relations with A Changing Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).

candidacy.³ The fact that Turkey stood on a par with the European allies within a Eurocentric intergovernmental NATO during the Cold War seems to have led many in Turkey to believe that the country's Europeanness would not be contested by the EU members in the 1990s.⁴

It seems that Turkey's leaders long failed to comprehend the nature of the EU's integration process in the 1990s, as well as to assess the impact of the EU's integration process on its own security interests. Such differences, in fact, only grew throughout the 1990s. Ankara's traditional understanding of security threats effectively created a gulf between it and many EU member-states, especially as the latter perceived the principal security challenges as emanating from nonstate actors and forces arising from globalization. Most EU members did not perceive existential security threats stemming from state actors in the Middle East, WMD (weapons of mass destruction) arsenals held by Turkey's neighbours, or the nature of those regimes themselves. Constructive engagement based on economic and political transactions, UN-led multilateral diplomacy, and long-term aid designed to eliminate the underlying causes of poverty were viewed as the

3 Mustafa Aydin, "Securitization of history and geography: Understanding of security in Turkey," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 3, no.2 (2003): 163-84; and Mustafa Aydin, "The determinants of Turkish foreign policy and Turkey's European connection," *The Review of International Affairs* 3 (winter 2003): 306-31.

4 As an aside, one can clearly notice the state-centric and geopolitical perspectives in the Turkish view of ESDP. Having underestimated the impact of the EU's integration process and distinctive security identity on the European attempts at building European military capability, Turkey rushed to join the ESDP's decision-making process as a troop-contributing country. Many in Turkey thought that the EU had finally started to develop a global security vision that would rely in part on a common European military force. The traditional Turkish elites also interpreted such EU attempts as a deliberate effort to counter or balance the United States. Conceived of in this way, it was not difficult for Turkish leaders to evaluate the status of non-membership in this new arrangement from a "self-other" dichotomy. The frequently asked question in Turkey was how likely the EU members would continue to see Turkey as European in the post-Cold War era within the framework of this developing global strategic identity. This was especially worrying since security relations have long been one of the significant links connecting Turkey to Europe. Responding to the EU's rejection of its participation in the decision-making mechanisms of the ESDP as an equal party, Turkey vetoed the EU's right of assured access to the assets of the Atlantic alliance. After lengthy negotiations that addressed Ankara's concern that the EU could use a European military force against it over Cyprus, the parties sorted out this problem in December 2002.

best means to deal with the security problems perceived by the EU. Turkey, on the other hand, widened the scope of issues that might be viewed as soft-security threats but also continued to regard its Middle Eastern neighbours as the sources of hard-core security threats. Indeed, in the post-Cold War years, while the scope of issues seen as security threats decreased inside the EU, the opposite was the case as far as Turkey was concerned. Any dialogue between Turkey and the EU on such issues was therefore limited by fundamentally divergent security conceptualizations.

A fifth problem attached to the pursuit of EU membership was based on the well-founded Turkish view that for Europe not to be seen as a security threat in Turkey, the latter needs to become a part of the former. Eliminating fears of dismemberment, isolation, and abandonment, such as the Ottoman empire had experienced, Turkey would have to be seen as European by the EU circles themselves.⁵ Indeed, the main rationale behind the westernization/Europeanization reforms of the late Ottoman and early republican eras was to secure the survival of the Turkish state against internal and external threats. Europeanization was therefore conceived of as a security strategy. One could best observe the traces of this psychology in Turkey's response to the EU's demand for the liberalization of its economy and democratization of its political culture. Both demands seemed to threaten the strong state constructed in response to these fears. Dealing with these issues constitutes the present dilemma for Turkey's traditional elites. On the one hand lies the legitimacy of the decades-long westernization process as launched by the founders of the republic: on the other hand lies the possibility that reforms being advanced by the AKP might indirectly contribute to the weakening of the main tenets of the republican regime, as has been demanded by the traditional opponents of the regime.

The last reason that EU accession might be problematic is due to Ankara's close link with Washington. Turkey's traditional elites have taken comfort in the fact that the US has long supported their country's aspirations for EU membership. A long-held assumption was that EU members were not capable of thinking strategically, and that Washington had the most influence in promoting the significance of Turkey for Europe's security. This view, however, meant that Turkey felt no need to undertake the costly reforms at home that were demanded by the EU membership

5 H. Taryk Oguzlu, "An analysis of Turkey's prospective membership in the European Union from a 'security' perspective," *Security Dialogue* 34, no. 3 (2003): 285-99.

process. Turkey's leadership appears to have failed to recognize the transatlantic gulf that was emerging throughout the 1990s. The more the rift between the US and EU grew, the less influence the US had with regard to promoting Turkey's aspiration for EU membership. Indeed, US support for that goal helped remind some EU members of the danger of having another Trojan horse (recalling earlier French concerns about the United Kingdom) inside the EU.⁶

DEBATES AFTER THE DECEMBER 1999 HELSINKI SUMMIT

At the Helsinki summit in December 1999, the EU confirmed Turkey's candidacy. This decision was a significant step toward reducing the ambiguity that had long characterized the EU's attitude towards Turkey. Since then, a sophisticated and rational debate has been taking place inside Turkey as to the costs and benefits of the EU accession process, let alone full membership status.⁷ The main reason why such an internal debate started in the wake of the Helsinki summit is that the prospects of accession to the union had increased. For the first time in EU-Turkey relations, a new set of views and opinions of the EU started to emerge. The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US, the accession to government of the AKP, and the US-led war in Iraq have accelerated this process. Before moving to examine the impact of these developments on Turkey's approach towards the EU, it is useful to summarize concisely the arguments of the two main sides in this debate.

First, there is what might be termed the *Euroskeptic discourse*. The adherents of this discourse come from a disparate grouping of organizations and institutions, including the Democratic Left Party, Nationalist Action Party, the former Welfare Party, elements of the Republican People's Party, some senior officers in the general staff, and a large portion of the well-established state bureaucracy. This group questions the current form of the EU in general, and the structure of the accession process that Turkey is undergoing in particular. Consistent with their inclination to see the EU as an intergovernmental institution, these circles have found it difficult to

6 Ziya Onis, "Turkey-EU-US triangle in perspective: Transformation or continuity," <http://home.ku.edu.tr>; see also Bruce Kuniholm, "Turkey's accession to the European Union: Differences in US and European attitudes and challenges for Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 2, no. 1 (2001): 25-53.

7 H. Taryk Oguzlu, "How to interpret Turkey's accession process with the European Union," *Perceptions* 7, no. 4 (2002-03): 51-83.

accept that the relationship with the EU would be asymmetric. The EU skeptics support integration as long as the whole process relies on a bilateral negotiation process open to give-and-take, rather than the imposition of Brussels' views on Ankara. To them, both parties need each other and therefore the negotiation process should take place between two equals.

The Euroskeptics tend to characterize the accession process as an EU policy, the main goals of which are to de-emphasize Turkey's geopolitically defined strategic identity, and to create the best possible conditions for Brussels to manage constructively Turkey's membership aspirations. Within this perspective, it is inconceivable that the accession process can serve the security interests of both the EU and Turkey. A basic assumption is that the EU will not (and cannot) admit Turkey as a full member for security reasons. The Euroskeptics also believe that the EU discriminates against Turkey, a largely Muslim country, on cultural, political, and economic grounds, and they point to Brussels' preferential treatment of the membership applications from the central and eastern European countries as evidence.⁸ Lastly, there is also a parochial dimension that the Euroskeptics draw attention to, namely that the main concern of Brussels will be to adapt successfully to the membership of the central and eastern European countries that have already joined the EU. As a consequence, during the next decade, the EU will not really be interested in Turkish membership as it will not have the required economic resources to cope with the problems of integrating Turkey.⁹ Declining public support within a number of EU member-states towards further enlargement and the focus of governments on ratification (sometimes by referendum) of the EU constitution, if it ever happens, will constitute additional barriers to Turkey's accession.

Equally, the Euroskeptics have focused on the domestic political implications in Turkey of EU membership. They argue that, rather than contributing to the emergence of a healthy liberal-pluralist political environment, the ongoing accession process will significantly damage the internal peace in Turkey, whose foundations have rested upon the Lausanne treaty of 1923 and the political reforms of Atatürk. The sensitivity of some members of the elite concerning the founding principles of the republic, name-

8 Ziya Öniş, "Turkey, Europe, and paradoxes of identity: Perspectives on the international context of democratisation," *Mediterranean Quarterly* (summer 1999): 107-36.

9 Nergis Canefe and Tanil Bora, "Intellectual roots of anti-European sentiments in Turkish politics: The case of radical Turkish nationalism," *Turkish Studies* 4, no. 1 (2003): 127-48.

ly secularism and an all-inclusive Turkish nationalism, has generated suspicions with regard to specific EU demands.¹⁰ As Turkey is the heir to the Ottoman empire, a multireligious and multinational polity, Euroskeptics believe that it is entirely justified for Ankara to be sensitive about these issues and reluctant to embrace rapid changes to existing policies.

Lurking behind such arguments lies the main reason for this skepticism, namely that Turkey's stability would be undermined if all of these liberal reforms are implemented but the EU still does not admit Turkey. For these liberal reforms to produce and augment security and stability in Turkey, full membership in the union is a must: otherwise, Turkey would be exposed to international pressures while vocal ethnic separatist and political Islamist circles inside the country demand more reform that would threaten further instability. In this situation, democratization might well lead to further Islamization of state-society relations and serious decentralization of the unitary state structure along ethnic and federal lines. Such a situation can only remind the Turkish elite of the last years of the enfeebled Ottoman empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as it became a puppet of the European powers.

The second approach found in contemporary Turkey is the *pro-EU discourse*. This perspective views the accession process as a means of ensuring and accelerating Turkey's inclusion in the EU as a full member. The adherents of this view include, among others, the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD), the Economic Development Foundation (IKV), the Motherland Party, the True Path Party, and some elements of the Republican People's Party. They are committed to the idea of European integration and are content with the current structure of the EU. This discourse strongly emphasizes what Turkey needs to do to obtain EU membership, for after all it is Turkey knocking at that organization's door. The underlying assumption here is that as the accession process unfolds, the quality of Turkey's relationship with the EU will improve. Turkish security will be positively affected because Ankara will gradually embrace the EU's distinctive security identity, not the other way around. According to this logic, therefore, if Turkey preserves its enthusiasm in seeking compliance with the Copenhagen criteria and fulfils the required steps that the

10 Henri J. Barkey, "The struggles of a 'strong' state," *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 1 (2000): 87-105, and Hasan Kösebalaban, "Turkey's EU membership: A clash of security cultures," *Middle East Policy* 9, no. 2 (2002): 130-46.

Helsinki conclusions and the accession partnership document define, it will be harder for the EU to delay the start of the accession talks. It is also presumed that once the accession talks start, it will be somewhat automatic for the EU to admit Turkey as a member. The legacy of the EU's enlargement process would suggest this outcome, and concerns about geopolitical issues and civilizational differences should not arise.

Those who are pro-EU look at security from a different perspective than that shared by Euroskeptics. In an age of diminished threats from other states, they argue that the main security referents in Turkey should be society in general, and each Turkish citizen in particular.¹¹ Turkey's accession process with the EU is, therefore, good for the country due to the promotion of pluralism and the liberalization of domestic political life. The pro-EU group believes that Turkey can only solve the problem of Kurdish separatism and the challenge of accommodating political Islam through the process of democratization of society as a whole.¹² They fear that if Turkey turns away from the EU, no credible incentive would continue to exist for the traditional state elites to try to embrace peaceful solutions for such issues

Of the two, the pro-EU perspective gained the upper hand during the 1999-2002 period. Turkey's traditionally skeptical view of the EU started to change. The military victory over the PKK and the rapprochement with Greece helped contribute to the emergence of a more favourable environment for undertaking radical EU-related reforms at home and adopting a more pro-EU oriented foreign policy abroad, particularly with regard to Cyprus. Nevertheless, the most significant external development that has helped produce a EU-friendly atmosphere in Turkey was the 9/11 attacks on the United States. Because its population is largely Muslim, Turkey was faced with the risk of the erosion of the west's acceptance of its European identity as a result of the US-led war against terrorism emanating from some parts of the Islamic world. The overwhelming majority of Turkey's political and bureaucratic elites have therefore begun to see Ankara's membership in the EU as the most important barrier against this happening. These elites came to believe that Turkey's significance for the

11 Ihsan Dagi, "Human rights and democratisation: Turkish politics in the European context," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 1, no. 3 (2001): 51-68.

12 Soli Özel, "After the tsunami," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 2 (2003): 80-94.

western community (a grouping that includes the United States and members of the EU) would likely increase after 9/11 due to Ankara's secular orientation at home and pro-western orientation abroad. As a result, some policy makers started to see the goal of Turkey's membership in the EU as an important, possibly vital, national interest.

THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY (AKP) AND 9/11

After 9/11, the accession to power in Ankara of an Islamist political party in November 2002 left many western governments uncertain of the future direction of Turkish politics. Such concerns have, however, proven unwarranted. For the majority of the people who voted for the AKP, the main reason for doing so was not the Islamist agenda of the party, but its pro-European/pro-western international outlook and neoliberal economic policies. The failure of the old parties to deliver economic success and the shifting of the economic centre from the Istanbul-based TUSIAD to the Anatolian Tigers¹³ contributed to the electoral triumph of the AKP.¹⁴ It is also important to note that the mainstream of political Islam in Turkey has undergone a transformation in recent years. As a result of the antiwestern, antisecularist and antidemocratic outlook represented by the Welfare Party and Necmettin Erbakan in the mid-1990s, western governments might have failed to recognize the paradox that emerged on 3 November 2002: namely an Islamist government in Ankara that was more pro-EU than its rigidly secular predecessors.

There are several reasons why the AKP leadership views membership in the EU to be a key national interest for Turkey, particularly when assessed in terms of national security. The first is that Turkey can most effectively cope with the security challenges and risks of the globalization process by integrating with the global community through the EU accession process.¹⁵ For Turkey to avoid fragmentation or dismemberment

13 Anatolian Tigers is the name used for the medium- and small-sized economic entrepreneurs located in different parts of Anatolia, rather than Istanbul. They are assumed to challenge the Istanbul-based TUSIAD. Compared to the members of TUSIAD, the Anatolian Tigers are more sensitive to Islam and Turkey's conservative norms.

14 E. Fuat Keyman and Ziya Onis, "A new path emerges," *The Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 2 (2003): 95-107.

15 Kemal Kirisci, "Between Europe and the Middle East: The transformation of Turkish politics," *MERIA Journal* 8, no. 1 (March 2004).

through globalization (the most serious security threat Turkey faces), the safest strategy is to evolve into a liberal-pluralistic democracy. This will be pushed forward by the EU's integration process. Such an approach will likely be successful at home since many Turks regard Europeanization as a legitimate globalization strategy, and many believe it will bring Turkey closer to the sources of its western/European identity.

Equally importantly, Turkey would be better able to deal with the centrifugal effects of globalization as a result of EU membership. If threats and risks to individual and societal needs are far more important than the traditional threats to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, Turkey will more easily address this new security understanding by trying to meet the EU's accession criteria, for the EU's conception of security clearly shapes these criteria. The idea that more security would come through more freedom and devolution of sovereignty to nonstate actors is prevalent within the EU, and Turkey is slowly adopting the same outlook. Globalization through Europeanization does not mean that the capacity of the Turkish state to deal with new kind of threats would decrease. Indeed, the Turkish state's ability in this regard would likely increase. It is worth mentioning in this regard that Turkey has been one of the few countries in the post-9/11 era that has increased the scope of rights and freedoms of citizens, while at the same time dealing with new and growing security threats, such as religious terrorism.¹⁶

A third reason for the AKP's interest in the EU is purely economic. It is quite likely that Turkey would attract new foreign investment if it is viewed as politically stable and a member of the western community of states. To support this argument, one need only point to the early example of two economic giants of the EU, namely Fiat and Mercedes-Benz, that have recently applied to Ankara to move their regional headquarters and manufacturing plants to Turkey. These applications followed by only one day the government's decision to let foreign nationals set up businesses in Turkey. One can argue, therefore, that the quickest way to guarantee continued foreign investment like this is the successful completion of the EU's accession process.

16 Mim Kemal Oke, *Dervis ve Komutan: Ozgurluk ve Demokrasi Sarkacindaki Turkiye'nin Kimlik Sorunu* [Priest and the Commander: Turkey's Identity Question at the Intersection of Freedom and Security] (Istanbul: Alfa Yayinlari, 2004).

The war on terror is also a factor behind the AKP's position. During the ongoing war, Ankara's membership in the EU will assist in increasing both its hard and soft power resources. For those who make this argument, EU membership might well assist the greater Middle East project recently announced by the US, for the main reason that Turkey is the clearest example of a working democracy in the Islamic world.¹⁷ The attractiveness of the Turkish model in the Islamic world is, nevertheless, more complicated than most commentators appreciate, and is contingent on the successful implementation of the reforms required by the EU's accession process. The traditional Kemalist understanding of top-down Turkish modernization includes the basic assumption that further modernization would be concomitant with further Europeanization (including the continued adoption of Europe's positivism and unitary nation-state ideology).

There is, moreover, a basic compatibility of the Kemalist model and Islam. A second Turkish model, more consistent with the AKP's approach, also emphasizes the urgency of modernization/Europeanization. It differs from the purely Kemalist model in holding that such processes can take place only through further democratization and liberalization in a bottom-up manner. Importantly, this version holds that Islam is compatible with democracy and modernization, an argument that might well appeal to the large Muslim populations in the Middle East.¹⁸ For Turkey's secular democracy to be attractive for others, it needs to be reconstituted within a liberal-pluralistic framework.

Basic balance of power thinking is another reason for the AKP's support to membership in the EU. It is reasonable to assume that Turkey would increase its bargaining power vis-à-vis the United States by improving the quality of its relations with the EU. Given that the degree of interdependency of US-Turkish relations is highly favourable to the United States, a weak and non-Europeanizing Turkey would not be able to stand up to American demands. The latest Iraqi crisis demonstrated the fragile relationship between the US and Turkey, as they could not cooperate due to the

17 Omer Taspinar, "An uneven fit? The 'Turkish model' and the Arab world: US policy towards the Islamic world," The Brookings Institution, analysis paper no. 5, August 2000, www.brookings.org; and Graham E. Fuller, "Turkey's strategic model: Myths and realities," *The Washington Quarterly* 27 (summer 2004): 51-64.

18 Michael Hirsh, "Bernard Lewis revisited: What if Islam isn't an obstacle to democracy in the Middle East, but the secret to achieving it?" *The Washington Monthly*, November 2004, 13-19.

existence of mutual suspicions over each other's real intentions. The EU played a balancing role in this regard mainly because of the fact that the Turkish leadership paid close attention to the Europeans before formulating its own view, particularly concerning the American demands to use Turkey's territory as a launching pad. In Iraq, Turkey and several of the EU members shared similar interests. For both, any US-led war to topple Saddam was viewed as illegitimate and unnecessary. While Turkey was alert to the possibility that any war in Iraq might lead to the emergence of an independent Kurdish state, many EU members were concerned that the US might resort to unilateral security actions elsewhere. The EU factor would also play a balancing role in another sense. If Turkey did not have a Kurdish problem at home, it would have certainly faced the US demands more confidently. The EU is important here because only through the reforms undertaken during the EU membership process can Turkey resolve its Kurdish dispute. If the Kurdish problem were solved, Turkey's relevance to the United States will be far less dependent on Turkey's military capabilities and geostrategic location, as used to be the case, and more on its identity as a Muslim democracy. Indeed, Turkey's attractiveness as a US ally in the war on terror, as well as Ankara's ability to negotiate with foreign governments, would likely increase if Turkey could solve its internal (mainly radical Islamist and separatist Kurdish) security problems through pluralization and liberalization of domestic political order.¹⁹

In this regard, it is important to note that as long as Turkey suffers from a domestic Kurdish problem, it will always feel somewhat threatened by what happens in northern Iraq. The ambiguity of the US policy on the Kurdish enclave in that region has inflamed this feeling. If Turkey did not have a Kurdish problem at home, one would be justified in assuming that Turkey's responses to developments in northern Iraq would likely have been quite different. It is not being argued here that Turkey might (or should) turn to leading members of the EU for help against the Kurds or the United States. Instead, the EU (in fact, the ongoing accession process) is an instrument that might enable Turkey to resolve the Kurdish dispute, and then to face foreign policy issues, including security challenges and great power relations, more confidently. In other words, closer integration with the EU, including

19 H. Tarik Oguzlu, "Changing dynamics of Turkey's US and EU Relations," *The Middle East Policy* 11 (spring 2004): 98-105.

membership, would, according to the AKP leadership, assist in removing political vulnerabilities that currently limit Turkey's foreign policy options.

It is as a result of this thinking that Turkey has attempted to reconcile its foreign and security policy preferences with those of the EU in the post-9/11 era. This process started well before the US-led war in Iraq in the spring of 2003. Turkey has not only moved closer to the EU in terms of the way it defines the conditions of security at home, it has also started to embrace more pro-EU-oriented stances on some particular foreign policy issues. The first clear example in this regard was in December 2002 shortly after the AKP assumed office, when Turkey finally came to an agreement on the modalities of the EU using NATO's military capabilities in EU-led and EU-only missions. In addition to this, Ankara adopted positions similar to those of other EU countries, on such issues as the US demand to use Turkish territory to launch its war to oust the Saddam regime, the US request to deploy Turkish forces in central Iraq to help the US-led coalition forces achieve stability, the US request to deploy NATO forces into Iraq in the post-Saddam era, and on the Israel-Palestinian dispute. Even though EU members themselves often had different opinions and/or policy stances on these issues, Turkey's own position was closer to that of France or Germany, two leading members of the EU, than it was to the US. Despite the fact that German and French interests in Iraq did not always coincide with those of Turkey, these three could at least agree on the following points: any US-led military involvement in Iraq would be illegitimate without UN endorsement; the continuation of Saddam's rule in Baghdad would better ensure the territorial integrity of the country; the decades-long sanctions regime did play a significant role in the elimination of weapons of mass destruction; rather than putting troops on the ground to overthrow Saddam, the western community should replace the ongoing sanctions regime with smart sanctions; and the deployment of NATO troops without the UN-ization of the dispute would not make things better, but would only support the US-led military occupation of Iraq. It is also worth mentioning in this regard that when the Turkish parliament authorized the deployment of around 10,000 troops to south and central Iraq in response to a US request in late 2003, Ankara sought assurances from Berlin and Paris as to whether such a Turkish presence in Iraq would negatively affect its EU accession prospects. If the German and French governments had openly criticized this Turkish decision, which they did not, Turkey would probably have not taken such a decision.

Turkey and the EU not only have similar policies on Iraq, but they also share similar views on how to pursue relations with Iran, and how to contribute to the democratization of the greater Middle East region. Rather than labelling Iran as part of an “axis of evil” and urging coercive measures against it, both Turkey and the EU concur that a policy of constructive engagement or a critical dialogue based on credible incentives and costly punishments would likely yield better results in terms of cooperation on nonproliferation of WMD. Both Ankara and EU capitals believe the idea that external pressures, coercive strategies, and an immediate regime change would not likely result in true democratization. Instead, both hold that a long-term strategy of economic development and political liberalization, especially emanating from internal dynamics, would more likely result in democratization in the years ahead.

It is also important to note here that the current government’s pro-EU positions on domestic and foreign issues have been embraced, not only by figures in the AKP, but also by the allegedly more Euroskeptic Turkish generals.²⁰ Many senior military commanders now view Turkey’s membership in the EU as being in the country’s interest, and this attitude is becoming more entrenched. Both the political elite and the military establishment have started to see the reforms undertaken within the EU accession process as strengthening Ankara’s international profile. Indeed, statements by many senior generals indicate that the Turkish armed forces (TAF) have begun to define Turkey’s security identity and interests in a way consistent with EU norms and principles.²¹ The new emphasis on economic development and political liberalization at home, and participation in multilateral peacekeeping operations and the use of economic diplomacy abroad, attest to this changing rationale. This attitude helps explain the acceptance of radical cuts in defence budgets, as well as reducing the overt political profile of the armed forces. While some observers, both at home and abroad, still believe that the TAF opposes the EU related reforms, in fact the opposite is the case. The TAF is only suspicious of the potentially negative impact such reforms might have on Atatürk’s legacy should Turkey’s efforts not be reciprocated by the EU. The years since 1999 have demonstrated that the less ambiguous the

20 Speech by deputy chief of staff, Yasar Buyukanit, conference on globalization and security, Turkish War Academy, 29-30 May 2003, www.tsk.mil.tr.

21 Ibid.

EU's approach towards Turkey has been, the more positive the military establishment in Turkey is toward the passage and implementation of EU-related reforms.

Interestingly, the AKP has also argued that Turkey's accession would in fact be in the EU's own interest. Such reasoning manifests itself in some particular ways. First, Turkish leaders, including Prime Minister Erdogan, have pointed to the close linkage between Turkey's accession to the EU and the EU's future identity. They have argued that if the EU does not start the accession talks with Turkey after the latter has implemented numerous significant reforms, the EU would contradict its own identity. Turkish leaders have argued, instead, that if the EU's future identity is to reflect multiculturalism, secularism, tolerance, and a multispeed integration process, then it is logically impossible to reject Turkey's membership application.²² In this regard, the AKP has strongly rejected any form of special status short of full membership for Turkey within the EU. (Such an approach had been urged by some leaders of the Christian Democratic Union in Germany as an alternative to full membership.) Erdogan has argued publicly that the credibility of the EU in the eyes of the international community would likely decrease if Turkey were not treated fairly.²³

Some AKP leaders have also tried to convince skeptical Europeans of the international political value of Turkey's accession.²⁴ They assert that, just as Spain has been the gate of the EU to the Latino-Hispanic world, Turkey can play a similar role in support of the EU's outreach to the Middle East and to central Asia. Middle Eastern countries will likely see Turkey as a role model if the latter is Europeanized and if its Europeanization efforts are rewarded by the EU. Indeed, AKP leaders have tended to define Turkey's bridge identity as constitutive of its own European identity. Turkey's capacity to play this kind of a bridging role has been significantly increased in the post-9/11 era. The joint summit between the EU and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) held in Istanbul in Spring 2002 proved to be promising in this regard. Increasing EU-OIC convergence on the Israel-Palestine dispute alongside Turkey's special relationship with Israel, and Ankara's

22 Kemal Kirisci and Zeynep Gulsah Capan, "Turkey on the edges of convention on the 'future of Europe'," *South European Society and Politics* 9 (summer 2004): 173-91.

23 See Erdogan's speech at Harvard University, www.mfa.gov.tr.

24 *Ibid.*

success in getting the OIC to elect Turkey's candidate as the secretary general of the OIC on 15 June 2004, would seem to support this assessment.

To AKP circles, Turkey's accession would tell the US that the EU is contributing to the stabilization of Europe's peripheries, thereby allowing Washington to concentrate its efforts and resources on more serious and troubled areas, such as central and east Asia. Indeed, both Turkish military and political elites believe that the success of the EU's recently announced neighbourhood policy might be positively affected by Turkey's membership. This would send the strongest signal, it can be argued, to the Muslim world that the EU does not define its security identity and its interests in opposition to the Muslim world. In this regard, one can claim that the terrorist attacks in Madrid in spring 2004 have brought the EU closer to Turkey, for these blasts have very clearly demonstrated that Europe is not immune from radical terrorism, thereby reinforcing the coherence of the antiterror coalition.

More generally, the AKP leadership has argued that Turkey's membership in the EU would bolster the claims of those who argue that the war on terrorism should not be viewed as a clash of civilization between the developed Christian north and the underdeveloped Muslim south.²⁵ Because the furtherance of democratization and liberalization is increasingly considered an effective means of combating religious extremism, the EU's role in projecting democracy to the Middle East might become important in the years to come.²⁶ Turkey's inclusion in the EU might well strengthen the EU's hand in this regard.

A CASE STUDY:

TURKEY'S CHANGING RATIONALE ON THE CYPRUS DISPUTE

Evidence of Ankara's new approach to relations with the EU can be found very clearly in Turkey's changing policy on Cyprus. The Erdogan

25 Recep Tayyip Erdogan, "Turkey, Islam and the West," *Global Agenda*, January 2004, and Abdullah Gul, "Turkey's role in a changing Middle East environment," *Mediterranean Quarterly* (winter 2004): 1-7. See also Timothy M. Savage, "Europe and Islam: Crescent waxing, cultures clashing," *The Washington Quarterly* 27 (summer 2004): 25-50.

26 "Turkey in Europe: More than a promise?" *Report of the Independent Commission on Turkey*, September 2004, 18; Richard Youngs, "The European Union and democracy promotion in the Mediterranean: A new or disingenuous strategy," *Democratization* 9 (spring 2002): 40-63; and Richard Gillespie and Richard Youngs, "Themes in European democracy promotion," *Democratization* 9 (spring 2002): 1-16.

government has increasingly recognized the linkage between its Cyprus policy and Turkey-EU relations. In the past, Turkish leaders tended to argue that the two issues were separate from each other. The determination of the current government to see that the Cyprus dispute no longer acts as an obstacle to Turkey's membership in the EU is therefore unprecedented. In formulating its policy, Ankara seems to have assumed that the need on the part of the EU to admit a unified Cyprus was so great that Turkey could make use of this situation to its advantage. By linking Turkey's contribution to the settlement of the Cyprus dispute to its own membership prospects, the AKP government appears to have first assumed that the EU would need to come closer to Turkey if it wanted the island to enter the union as a single entity. This was later to change, but the Erdogan government nonetheless viewed the Cyprus dispute as an opportunity for improving and deepening relations with the EU.

In analyzing the AKP's Cyprus policy, one needs to look at three phases in its development. The first period ran from the accession to power by the AKP (November 2002) to the EU's Copenhagen summit (December 2002) when EU leaders were to decide which candidate countries would be invited to join in May 2004. The opinion in Ankara was that the summit would, at the very least, announce a date for the start of the accession talks with Turkey, for Ankara had been undertaking radical reforms for the previous four years or since the Helsinki summit. These expectations were buttressed by the active US support given to Turkey's bid for EU membership. Many Turkish leaders believed that US lobbying efforts on behalf of Turkey would likely help produce a Turkey-friendly decision at the Copenhagen summit. At this time, Turkey's Cyprus policy was defined by the AKP's support for the initial version of the Annan plan, which mainly aimed at ending the division of the island before its accession to the EU. As well, the leading figures of the AKP did not exchange polemics with President Rauf Denktaş of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and, instead, pleaded with him to negotiate with the Greek Cypriots. Throughout this period Erdogan traveled to several EU capitals to lobby for Turkey's membership. The expectations of a positive outcome for these efforts produced a pro-EU-oriented Cyprus policy in this period.

The second phase began with the announcement at the Copenhagen summit that the EU would decide in December 2004 whether or not to set a date for the start of the accession talks with Turkey. It ended with the TRNC's parliamentary elections in December 2003. During this period,

Turkey was first and foremost concerned with the quality of its relations with the United States. The ups and down experienced in US-Turkish relations as a result of the war in Iraq did not create a suitable atmosphere for the AKP to focus its energy on the Cyprus dispute. Many in Turkey had criticized the AKP government's attempts at influencing the parliament to allow US troops to enter Iraq from Turkey, and it would have been very difficult at best for the government to argue for the merits of the Annan plan in public. The ambiguous EU conclusions in Copenhagen and the increasing US demands on Turkey over Iraq combined to reawaken nationalist feelings. The anti-EU and anti-Annan plan stance of Denktaş, who had long enjoyed a high level of popularity in Turkey, also made it difficult for the AKP government to appear supportive of the plan. Therefore, the government's public support for the Annan plan decreased. It was also unable to apply sufficient pressure on Denktaş to go to the Hague in early March 2003 to discuss the Annan plan with the Greek Cypriot leadership in a last-minute effort to forge a settlement before the Republic of Cyprus acceded to the EU. As a result, the Greek-Cypriot Republic of Cyprus was admitted to the EU on 16 April 2003.

Even though the AKP leadership continued to believe that the Annan plan constituted a suitable ground for the solution of the dispute, it had to soften its public support for tactical concerns. Domestic political considerations rendered any other approach impossible.²⁷ It would not be an overestimation to argue that the government found itself caught between two opposing forces. On the one hand, there was the growing influence of nationalist feelings in Turkey, while on the other lay the demands of the EU membership process that the government wanted to meet: each demanded a different response to the Annan plan. The government, for example, supported Denktaş's decision to open the border to the Greek Cypriots on 23 April 2003, thereby bolstering the Turkish Cypriot leader's position at home and improving his image abroad. Such a move was also in accord with the prevailing mood in Turkey that allowed constructive steps to be taken so long as they were not forced on the TRNC by outside powers. Just three months later, however, the Erdogan government hesitated to sign a formal customs union agreement with the TRNC, and instead initialled a customs

27 Meltem Muftuler-Bac, "The new face of Turkey: The domestic and foreign policy implications of November 2002 elections," *East European Quarterly* 37 (January 2004): 421-38.

union framework agreement. This lower-level agreement was adopted mainly because the EU authorities had made it clear that if Turkey created a customs union with the TRNC, it would certainly contradict the EU's rules and the terms of the Turkey-EU customs union.²⁸ Turkish leaders were uncertain how to proceed, but they clearly hesitated before pursuing policies that might damage future relations with the EU.

The last phase of the AKP government's policy on Cyprus coincided with the gradual improvement of relations with the US and the December 2003 TRNC parliamentary elections that saw the victory of pro-Annan Plan and pro-EU political parties. These developments led Erdogan in early-2004 to urge UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to resume negotiations based on his plan. The parliamentary elections had significantly weakened Denktas's position and good relations with the US reduced the popular anger that had constrained the government's earlier efforts to affect a solution to this issue. This time, therefore, the political environment at home was ripe for the Erdogan government to argue openly for the Annan plan.

From early February to late March 2004, the parties conducted inter-communal talks on the basis of the Annan plan, and on 1 April all parties concerned decided to put the latest version to referendums in both parts of the island on 24 April. While the Turkish Cypriots overwhelmingly voted for the plan, the majority of the Greek Cypriots rejected it. Throughout this process, the Turkish government had strongly supported the Annan plan and promised to work for its approval by the Turkish Cypriot Community. Despite the failure of the Annan plan to obtain approval by the Greek-Cypriot community, Ankara's policy brought an end to the three and a half decades of criticism of its position from the international community, including the EU. Some commentators predicted that Cyprus would still prove to be a stumbling block at the EU's December 2004 summit, when a decision on opening accession talks was due to be decided. However, the Erdogan government's approach had effectively diverted the attention for the failure to resolve the divided island's problem away from Ankara and the TRNC toward the Republic of Cyprus itself.²⁹ The European Union did

28 Simsir, *AB, AKP ve Kibris*, 568-69.

29 Kofi Annan, "Report of the secretary-general on his mission of good-offices in Cyprus," 28 May 2004, <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org>.

not keep its promise to help ease the economic hardships of the TRNC or to gradually lift the economic embargo as goodwill measures in response to the overwhelming support of the Turkish Cypriots for the Annan plan. It is nonetheless noteworthy that Greek Cypriot President Papadopoulos has continued to attract the main criticism of the EU, as well as the US, and that Turkey was given a date at the EU's Brussels summit in December 2004 for the start of the accession talks in October 2005 despite the objections of the Greek Cypriot leadership.

CONCLUSION

The Europeanization policies of the current AKP government reflect more the convictions of party leaders and less purely tactical/instrumental reasons. The fear that the AKP is implementing broad reforms in order to create the best political environment for Turkey's re-Islamization seems to be highly exaggerated. On the contrary, that an allegedly pro-Islamic party is willing to undertake broad pro-western reforms shows how deeply a quite significant majority of Turkey's population has embraced the goal of westernization. The attitude of the AKP towards the Europeanization process can legitimately be seen as the internalization of western values promoted by the secular Kemalist founders of the republic, and by a quiet majority of the people. The changing geopolitical structure and equations in the post-9/11 era, the dynamics of Turkey-US relations in the aftermath of the US-led war in Iraq, and the increasing EU interest in Turkey, have all contributed to the emergence of a pro-EU oriented atmosphere in Turkey.

Turkey's structural economic conditions, its growing population, and its distinctive Muslim culture, alongside the EU's difficulties in digesting the membership of the recently admitted central and eastern European countries, remain obstacles to Turkey's accession. The need for EU leaders to convince skeptical public opinion in their countries, particularly in France, of the value of Turkish accession to the EU might create an additional problem for Ankara. However, as the EU commission's report of 6 October 2004 has made clear, Turkey has now satisfied the political aspects of the Copenhagen criteria, a precondition for the accession talks to start with any aspirant country. Gunther Verheugen, the EU commissioner for enlargement, has stated that there are no more obstacles in Turkey's way.³⁰

³⁰ See Zornitsa M. Stoyanova-Yerburgh, "Turkey and the European Union: One step closer," 26 September 2004, www.worldpress.org.

The majority of both the Turkish elite and the EU's member-states are cognizant of the fact that Turkey's full membership might take many years to realize. Nevertheless, it will be more difficult for the EU to adhere to its traditional ambiguous policy towards Turkey in the face of the latter's growing determination to join the EU, its evident willingness to implement the necessary reforms, and the commencement of accession talks in October 2005.