

WHAT DOES TURKEY THINK?

Edited by Dimitar Bechev

Foreword by Ivan Krastev, Mark Leonard,
Sinan Ülgen and Andre Wilkens



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Preface

The essays in this volume are collected from two study trips to Istanbul, Ankara and Gaziantep in November 2010 and February-March 2011, a joint endeavour by ECFR, the Istanbul-based Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), the Sofia-based Centre for Liberal Strategies (CLS) and the Stiftung Mercator. The study trips involved high-level thinkers from various European countries to hear leading Turkish intellectuals, political figures, journalists and diplomats explain Turkey's dilemmas, priorities and aspirations first hand, and to acquaint themselves with a country and society that is undergoing rapid change as it grows increasingly prosperous and influential in regional and global affairs.

This essay collection aims to bring together a range of perspectives and voices to give direct, unfiltered insight into Turkey's vibrant political debate. The transformation of Turkish foreign policy has been making headlines in Western media over the last few years. But this report first takes stock of debates on identity and democratisation before examining Turkey's relations with the European Union (EU), and its place in regional politics and the wider world. We hope that this publication will be a reference point for an international audience looking to better understand the backdrop to Turkey's recent transformation.

In addition to the authors of the papers, the participants based in Turkey included: **Abdullah Gül**, President of the Republic of Turkey; **Ahmet Han**, Kadir Has University; **Ali Çarkoğlu**, Koç University; **Ayhan Kaya**, Bilgi University; **Ayşe Sezgin**, Deputy Undersecretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; **Başak Kale**, Middle East Technical University; **Binnaz Toprak**, Bahçeşehir University; **Çağrı Erhan**, Republican People's Party; **Can Buharalı**, Deputy Chairman, EDAM; **Cem Duna**, Former Ambassador, Cemal Usak, Vice President, Journalists and Writers Foundation; **Cengiz Aktar**, Bahçeşehir University; **Cengiz Şimşek**, General Director, Gaziantep Organised Zone;

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Participants from the EU included **Aleksander Smolar**, President of the Board, Stefan Batory Foundation; **Andre Wilkens**, Director of the Mercator Centre Berlin, Stiftung Mercator; **Anna Ganeva**, Executive Director, Centre for Liberal Strategies; **Esra Gülfidan**, Unicredit; **Fabien Baussart**, President, Center of Political and Foreign Affairs (Paris); **Gerald Knaus**, Chairman, European Stability Initiative (ESI); **Hans Eichel**, former Minister of Finance, Germany; **Heather Grabbe**, Executive Director, Open Society Institute – Brussels; **Ivan Krastev**,

Chairman of the Board, Centre for Liberal Strategies; **Jaakko Itoniemi**, former Ambassador and former Executive Director, Crisis Management Initiative; **Mark Leonard**, Director, ECFR; **Meglana Kuneva**, former European Commissioner for Consumer Protection; **Sasha Havlicek**, Executive Director, Institute for Strategic Dialogue; **Stefan Kornelius**, Journalist at *Süddeutsche Zeitung*; and **Teresa Gouveia**, Trustee to the Board of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Portugal.

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Ivan Krastev, Mark Leonard, Andre Wilkens and Sinan Ülgen

Dimitar Bechev

Introduction

Turkey is no longer the country the West once knew. The Libya crisis has again shown that its support for NATO is qualified. Ankara prefers engaging rather than containing Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Iran, and is comfortable talking to Hamas, Hezbollah and Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir. Its once warm relations with Israel are now in tatters after the tensions over the Gaza flotilla in May 2010. Turkey is no longer frantically banging on the EU's door but pursues a multi-vector policy serving its commercial and security interests. Ties with Russia are thriving. Turkish entrepreneurs are making inroads in far-off places in Africa or Latin America. In short, Turkey is now an actor, an economic pole, and perhaps an aspiring regional hegemon – or “*order setter*” (*düzen kurucu*). The paradox is that in the process Turkey has also become more like us: globalised, economically liberal and democratic. As the American television presenter Charlie Rose recently put it: “Turkey doesn't want to go east or west; it wants to go up.”

To unravel the puzzle that is Turkey we need to delve deeper into the ways the country sees itself and the world. Throughout the Cold War and well into the 1990s, the West had little time for such questions because it thought it knew the answer. Turkey – or at least the part of Turkey that mattered – wanted to be part of the Western club, shunned Islam and kept itself at arm's length from the Middle East, believed firmly in the 19th century notions of progress, and saw the strong state and its rigid national ideology as a shortcut to modernity. Turkey-sceptics cared even less about the country's self-image. What they saw was an authoritarian state, as portrayed in films such as *Midnight Express*, a militarist bully, too poor, too big to digest, or home to too many Muslims, inconveniently close to the gates of Fortress Europe.

These stereotypes have proven wrong. Today's Turkey is no longer an impoverished and inward-looking Western periphery but the centre of its own

world that spans the territories of the former Ottoman Empire and beyond, linked by trade, cross-border investment, popular culture and people-to-people contacts. In the words of **Ibrahim Kalin**, foreign policy advisor to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, “Turkey is just beginning to read history from a non-Eurocentric point of view and recognising alternatives.” But the idea of a shift of axis, or the view that political Islam has hijacked the country’s foreign policy, is ill-suited to explain such an about-face. In fact, as Soli Özel argues compellingly in this collection, Turkey’s rise to prominence has its roots in the reshuffle of global and regional order following the end of the Cold War, 9/11 and the 2003 war in Iraq. It is also a product of economic globalisation, which, along with intimate, integrative ties with the EU, brought prosperity and helped expand democratic rule in Turkey.

Change in Turkey’s foreign policy is inseparable from change inside the Turkish polity. Since 2002, the mildly Islamist AK Party (AKP) has challenged the formerly omnipotent “deep state” ensconced in the military and the bureaucratic service, and brought the country closer to Europe’s norms of democracy and human rights. Greater openness has also meant dealing with a difficult past, as **Ayşe Kadioğlu** and **Orhan Miroğlu** describe vividly in their essay in this collection. There is now a public discussion of the traumatic experience of Ottoman disintegration, the early republican decades, the army coups in 1960, 1971 and especially 1980, and the war in the Kurdish provinces. As **Hakan Altınay** puts it: “Compared to 2001, the Turkey of 2011 is a wealthier, more open, freer, more democratic, fairer, and more peaceful country.” What is more, it is now viewed as a source of inspiration, or even a model, for Arab societies rejecting sclerotic authoritarian regimes.

Whereas the old Turkey was haunted by anxieties, paralysed by tensions between state and society, and dogged by cycles of economic boom and bust, the AKP-led Turkey is brimming with confidence. Even the opponents of Erdoğan et al cheer at the government’s vision of a strong Turkey respected abroad. Today’s Turkey thinks it should not be taken for granted by the EU and the US and believes that the West needs it much more than it needs the West. That may be hubris but it rests on real achievement. The Turkish economy bounced back from the global crisis with breathtaking growth of 9 percent in 2010 and is projected to grow at 4 percent or more over the coming decade. Inflation is at historical lows; GDP per capita (PPP) has grown to \$14,243 in 2010 from about \$6,000 a decade earlier; and exports are becoming more sophisticated, pushing Turkey up the global value-added ladder.

Turkey's economy is now the world's 16th-largest and is the sixth-largest in Europe. Turkey is a proud member of the G-20 – not quite a BRIC but certainly full of ambition and dynamism. This robust performance is in stark contrast with the economic malaise spreading through its principal trading partner, the EU. This gives many Turks – not least businessmen in booming Anatolian towns such as Kayseri or Gaziantep, which are centres of support for the AKP – a sense of pride and schadenfreude. They feel vindicated and ridicule the visa wall that prevents them from travelling to the EU as freely as their exports can.

Old and new dilemmas

Although Turkey might feel that it has arrived, beneath the surface is a society that is confronted by a host of often painful and divisive dilemmas. The universe of Turkish political and social debate is infinite, a testament to the democratic progress achieved since the late 1990s. Our report has singled out three key areas of public discussion, all of which bear enormously on perceptions of what goes on inside the country, in Europe and in the wider world.

Firstly, can the new Turkey deal with its internal diversity, reconcile historical tensions and heal deep wounds? **Mustafa Akyol's** opening essay speaks of “many nations under God”: the conservative supporters of the AKP, the seculars who once felt ownership over the state but have now come to see themselves as a minority under threat; the Kurds; the Alevi; the non-Muslim communities; and the liberal intellectuals who once supported the AKP but have turned critical since. Akyol is optimistic that a new civilian constitution can bridge the differences, refashion the rigid secularist model inherited from the early republic, and offer solutions to the Kurdish issue. Orhan Miroğlu is similarly hopeful that “equal rights to all citizens and respect [for] all languages and differences” will be guaranteed. However, it is also true that the rethinking of fundamental issues such as nationhood, citizenship and relations between state and religion is still a work in progress and the solutions are not obvious.

If the first challenge is familiar, the second one is fairly new. It is a reflection of the fact that while Turkey has replaced the tutelage of the military-bureaucratic system with a more advanced democratic regime, the AKP has been in a leading position for a decade. Is Turkey moving in the direction of consolidating democratic achievements or threatened by populist majoritarianism or even authoritarian rule, this time with a socially conservative tinge? If the nightmare of secular elites in the 1990s was Islamisation leading to a second Iran, these

days a myriad of “anxious moderns” (*endişeli modernler*), some of whom looked favourably at the AKP, fear “Putinisation”. Over a glass of *raki*, they lambast Erdoğan’s insatiable appetite for power, the lack of checks and balances, and the pressure on critics in the media and civil society.

Concerned about the sustainability of democratic gains, **Hakan Altınay** spares no criticism for the EU whose reluctance to embrace Turkey has amplified the AKP’s authoritarian temptation. His other target is the liberals for their “easy alliances with all kinds of actors intent on pushing the armed forces back” and their “habit of minimising or ignoring the illiberal tactics of their allies”. For his part, **Osman Baydemir**, the mayor of Diyarbakır, decries the AKP’s partisan understanding of democracy, which in his view downplays social and economic rights as well as the legitimate claims of Kurds and other communities. **Şahin Alpay**, by contrast, argues that Turkey will continue moving towards a pluralist and liberal democratic system. He sees the AKP, traditionalist-religious society and Fethullah Gülen’s pious movement as agents of positive change.

Thirdly, the collection explores the reordering of Turkey’s foreign relations. Why is Turkey acting independently from the West? Is it a partner or a rival of the United States and the EU? Is Turkey’s own neighbourhood policy adding to or competing against the EU’s? All the authors seem to agree that, in addition to the domestic transformation addressed by the first two sections, change in foreign policy has to do with the redistribution of global political, economic and ideological power. According to **Ibrahim Kalın**, globalisation has nourished a vision of “multiple modernities”, superseding “the classical, Europe-bounded notion of modernisation”, to enable and force Turkey to “reinvent itself” by reaching back to its past and rejecting old polarities of East and West. The result is a new policy of engagement, presented by **Suat Kınıkhoğlu** as recasting neighbours from enemies into friends and partners. Capitalism has now triumphed over the siege mentality that used to permeate Turkey’s political culture, even if the battle is not over yet. But this happens at a time when relations with the EU have all but stagnated, with the current impasse in the membership negotiations threatening, according to **Atila Eralp** and **Zerrin Torun**, to result in a permanent blockage.

The Turkish public is losing faith that Turkey will ever make it into the EU. This begs the question of whether the policy of “integration into multiple regions” might not distance by default, if not by intention, Turkey from the EU. And the ambition to go it alone might not deliver. **Soli Özel** cautions that the Turkish policy in the Middle East has, paradoxically, depended a great deal

on the persistence of the authoritarian status quo within the region. With the Arab Spring, Muammar Gaddafi's refusal to peacefully cede power in Libya and Ankara's failure to restrain the regime in Syria from responding to pro-democracy protests with bullets, Turkey may be actually losing influence instead of charting a path forward for the Middle East and North Africa.

Bringing Europe back

The EU may be more and more absent from Turkey's public debates but it has not lost its significance altogether. Whether they like it or not, the EU and Turkey are, as Gerald Knaus puts it, trapped in a Catholic marriage: for all the disappointment, bad blood and infidelity, they are destined to stay together. The EU, for instance, plays an important role in each of the three areas of debate we explore here.

Take identity politics. The EU has proven its capacity to reconcile differences within Turkish society in the name of a common purpose. Until 2006-7, Brussels provided the political glue that held together a multi-coloured coalition pushing for a transition from a state under military-bureaucratic tutelage to a democracy worthy of the name. The prospect of EU membership brought together democratic ("soft") Kemalists, liberals opposed to the "deep state", Kurds, business people, ethnic and religious minorities, and, of course, the newly empowered Muslim middle class behind the AKP. True, its political conditionality became a divisive force as the story unfolded. A backlash then followed, spearheaded by Kemalist hardliners in the army, nationalist-minded magistrates, the CHP then headed by Deniz Baykal, and xenophobes on the right and on the left – all of whom were loath to see Turkey dismantle the *ancien régime* under the star-studded EU flag. Yet the pro-EU coalition stuck together as long as the promise of membership was credible.

In addition, the EU anchors democratisation at home. Even those who claim that Turkey has developed sufficient internal momentum over the past decade – a controversial point – would not go as far as to suggest that a revitalised membership perspective would not affect the pace and the quality of the democratisation process. Furthermore, the EU also has the potential to allay the fears of the seculars that the AKP's power is unchecked; moderate political polarisation as a new constitution is penned; push for minority rights; assist the transformation of the CHP into a democratic centre-left party and a credible opposition force; and further civilianise Kurdish politics.

The EU and Turkey also need one another in foreign policy. Atila Eralp and Zerrin Torun call for a strategic partnership that would exist in parallel to accession negotiations. Suat Kınıkkoğlu also makes a strong case that Ankara and Brussels have to act together in a shared – not contested – neighbourhood at a time of epochal changes. Turkey has the capacity, the know-how and the human and commercial networks. But only a democratic Turkey that has successfully tackled its own problems, such as the Kurdish issue, and enjoys close ties with the EU can keep up its appeal to the newly emergent Arab public.

The EU also remains key to economic success – Turkey’s other top foreign policy asset. The country’s competitiveness in the global economy depends on access to the EU’s massive internal market. Despite trade diversification towards neighbours in the Middle East, the former Soviet Union and further afield, the EU is still the largest partner, accounting for 40.5 percent of imports (€40.5 billion) and 45.9 percent of exports (€33.6 billion). The EU furthermore is still the source of 80 percent of FDI coming into Turkey, which is fundamental for innovation, technological advancement and development. For all its prowess, Turkey falls short in savings, R&D spending, skills and education, and employment rates. The country runs a worrying current account deficit of about 8 percent of GDP while the influx of “hot money” fuels concerns about an asset bubble. Meanwhile, wages are growing as the economy is expanding. To put it bluntly, Turkey is facing the middle-of-the-table predicament. It cannot compete with the Asian Tigers in terms of cheap labour any more, but it is still far from the knowledge-driven economies of the West. In other words, it’s too early to write the EU off.

But all this should not give policymakers in Europe a false sense of security. The EU is not indispensable and it won’t be the end of the world for Turkey if the relationship stays the way it is. Ankara is not going to call off the accession negotiations, but it will continue to vigorously and confidently pursue economic and diplomatic relations with its neighbours, looking for opportunities to exert influence and reap commercial benefits. Sadly, interdependence does not rule out conflict: a continued deadlock in accession negotiations might well inject a hefty dose of antagonism in the relationship and foment competition. There are already frictions in places such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Turkey and the EU pursue the same goal of conflict but look at one another with more than a little dose of jealousy, and Bosnia is nowhere near Iran when it comes to the divergence of views and the strategic stakes involved. To make interdependence work, the EU needs to engage the new Turkey.

TURKEY'S MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

Who are the Turks?

An American commentator once described his people as “two nations under God” – a play on the famous phrase “One nation under God” in the US Pledge of Allegiance. His basic argument was that America is deeply divided between liberal “blue” states and conservative “red” states. Turkey’s divisions are even more marked. Not only are the chasms far more pronounced, but the number of “nations” is also much higher. We can thus speak of several nations under the Star and Crescent, bitterly divided over values, lifestyle and politics.

The largest of these groups is broadly referred to as “the conservatives” (*muhafazakarlar*). Its adherents often either live in or originate from Anatolia, Turkey’s heartland. Sunni Islam is the most definitive source of their values, and the Ottoman Empire their golden age, while their lifestyle rests on a synthesis of religious identity and modern life. Only a small minority are ideological Islamists – in other words, those who favour a Sharia state. But all conservatives respect religion and want to preserve at least some aspects of traditional religious culture. In the past decade, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s AKP has emerged as the natural political choice for – if not the embodiment of – this conservative camp. It won 46 percent of the vote in 2007 and opinion polls show that it has maintained its popularity. This is Turkey’s largest “nation”.

Secularists (*laikler*), the second-largest cultural and political camp, are the opposite of the conservatives. Often referred to as Kemalists, almost all of them identify strongly with Atatürk’s secularist cultural revolution. For them, Turkey’s golden age was the era of the Kemalist republic that overthrew the Ottoman Empire. Their notion of secularism, which is hostile rather than neutral in its approach to religion, was imported by Atatürk from the French Third Republic. Hence the decades-long cultural battle between secularists and conservatives, manifested in the outright prohibition or curtailment of pious practices such as the wearing of the headscarf. Politically, the secularists are represented mainly by

the CHP, or “the Party of Atatürk”. Although it has been influenced by European social democracy, this has been outweighed by the nationalist and authoritarian tendencies of Kemalism. The CHP’s share of the vote fluctuates between 20 and 25 percent.

The cultural gap between the conservatives and the secularists is both vast and socially illuminating. For example, Turks themselves are sometimes instantly able to locate each another within one of these distinct groups. A headscarf or a particular form of moustache indicates a conservative identity, whereas an Atatürk pin would signal the opposite. Even the names that people choose for their children are politically loaded. A conservative family might opt for clearly Islamic names such as Ayşe, Abdullah or Ahmet, whereas a secularist family might prefer more suggestive names such as Çağdaş, Evrim or Devrim (which literally mean “Contemporary”, “Evolution” and “Revolution”).

These two “nations” even speak different languages. This goes back to Atatürk’s “linguistic revolution”, a state-imposed campaign to cleanse Turkish of Arabic and Persian influences. Consequently, the Turkish Language Foundation, a creation of Atatürk, began to “discover” (in other words, invent) “pure Turkish” replacements for tens of thousands of words in the rich Ottoman language. People in contemporary Turkish society go to great lengths to use either the “new” or the “old” language to identify themselves as either the children of the language revolution or its dissenters.

Although the secularists are politically represented by the CHP, this is not the whole story. They also used to be represented by the Republic of Turkey itself and the institution that used to be at its core: the military. In other words, the republic – an ideological and not a democratic state – favoured the Kemalists as model citizens. Other groups such as the conservatives or the Kurds were seen as suspect or even as the “enemy within”. This explains why the Turkish military is so beloved by secularists. It is an institution that is made up almost exclusively of secularist Turks and which embodies their ideology and interests. It would be unthinkable in Turkey today to have a colonel or a general who attends daily prayers or who has a wife who wears a headscarf.

The recent advance of conservatives to senior positions in state institutions that were previously reserved for ideologically suitable (i.e. Kemalist) citizens has shocked, infuriated and demoralised the secularists. For instance, when Abdullah Gül became president in 2007, generals and members of the CHP refused to shake hands with his wife, who wears a headscarf. Secularists often complain

about the “infiltration” of state institutions by conservatives and, in particular, by Islamists who had previously been excluded from the public sector.

This complex scenario has led to the emergence of the conservatives as ardent supporters of Turkey’s “de-militarisation” and democratisation over the past decade. They embraced Ankara’s bid for EU membership, which they viewed as a potential escape route from the authoritarian Kemalist state at home. This was surprising for some Westerners, who expected the secularists to represent the more liberal, pro-EU section of Turkish society. After all, the secularists were the ones leading what was deemed to be a “Western lifestyle”. But leading a Western lifestyle does not necessarily go hand in hand with adopting Western values or accepting Western democracy – as South Africa’s pro-apartheid whites proved.

There is, however, a small but influential group within Turkey’s secular “nation” that actually aspires to bring about a process of democratisation. This group of intellectuals, commonly referred to as “liberals”, does not share the Kemalist nostalgia for the 1930s and wants to see contemporary liberal democracy at home. Their popular base is very small – even the most promising liberal parties have not captured more than 1 percent of the vote in elections – but their influence on public discourse is crucial. Most liberals are secular – in fact, some are more secular than the Kemalists – but they are not *secularist*. In other words, they recognise the legitimate role of religion in the lives of individuals and societies. They have thus emerged as the defenders of the rights of both the conservative Muslims and all other groups that were marginalised under the Kemalist system, and as the most enthusiastic supporters of Turkey’s EU bid and the reforms required by it.

It is therefore no accident that in the first decade of the 21st century, an alliance emerged between the liberals and the AKP-led conservatives against the military and the Kemalist establishment as a whole. At the same time, however, the liberals have often criticised the AKP for insufficient liberalism and a lack of focus on the EU project. Such criticism looks set to become more vociferous in the near future as the AKP increasingly loses interest in the EU – in part a consequence of being rebuffed by the bloc. Such criticism also weighs heavily on moral conservatism – while Erdoğan’s patrimonial approach to politics raises concerns over a new era of authoritarianism, this time with the conservatives rather than the Kemalists at the helm.

In addition to the conservatives, secularists and liberals, there is a fourth camp in Turkish political life: the nationalists. They are represented by the Nationalist

Action Party (MHP), which currently enjoys the support of just over 10 percent of the population. It would be misleading to apply the term “Turkish nationalism” only to this grouping; nationalism can be found within both the conservative and the secularist camps. What sets the MHP and its grassroots supporters apart, however, is that nationalism is virtually the sole issue on their political agenda. Their brand of nationalism is a highly emotional and “masculine” one that mostly appeals to parochial elements of society.

Since the 1980s, the main engine driving Turkish nationalism and the MHP has been the popular reaction to Kurdish nationalism and, in particular, to the violent acts perpetrated by the outlawed PKK, which is defined as a terrorist group not only by Turkey but also by the United States and many European countries. The guerrilla war waged by the PKK against the Turkish state and the latter’s brutal counter-insurgency left some 40,000 people dead, leaving deep scars on both sides. The Kurds represent the most troubled of the multiple “nations” under the Star and Crescent. The Kurds were one of the many ethnicities within the Ottoman Empire’s “nation of Muslims” but never felt quite at home in the Turkish republic, which tried to force “Turkishness” upon all non-Turks. The PKK’s campaign is only the most recent and violent of more than two dozen rebellions since the republic was founded in 1923.

Nobody knows exactly how many Kurds there are in Turkey, but my informed estimate would be that there are around 15 percent of the population, or 10 million people. However, there are two important facts to bear in mind. First, migration to Western cities means that more than half of those Kurds no longer live in their historical homeland in the southeast of Turkey. Second, not all Kurds are Kurdish nationalists, let alone PKK supporters. The political parties that espouse PKK ideology (the Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, is the latest addition) routinely win 5 percent of the vote in national elections, which translates into support from one out of every three Kurds. Other Kurds, especially more religious ones, have recently voted for the AKP, which has implemented significant reforms and instigated symbolic moves on the “Kurdish question”. In other words, although most Kurds do not embrace the notion of “Turkishness”, they are well integrated within Turkish society. A key question for the years to come will be how to institutionalise that integration and put a definitive end to the conflict between the PKK and the security forces.

Finally, there are the religious minorities. The largest minority – although it is not designated as such in Turkish law – is the Alevi, an unorthodox Muslim community in Turkey. Politically speaking, they are to a certain extent Kemalist

and left-leaning, and hence have been solid supporters of the CHP. They feel discriminated against by the Sunni majority, for their places of worship, the *cemeviler*, do not enjoy the official support that mosques do. The AKP has taken some steps to resolve the “Alevi question” but without results.

There are also non-Muslim communities such as Armenians, Greeks and Jews, which unlike the Alevi are recognised by law as minorities. However, these communities, in particular the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate, had more freedom and privileges under the Ottoman Empire than in the Turkish republic. The nationalist and xenophobic republic has for a long time considered Greek, Armenian or Jewish citizens of Turkey to be “foreigners” – a fifth column supported by neighbouring Greece or “imperialists that want to divide Turkey”. Although some progress has been made in revising Turkey’s draconian secularist-nationalist laws under the AKP and thanks to EU reforms in the last decade, more still needs to be done.

Ultimately, the real guarantee of the rights and liberties of both the minorities and the majority would be a live-and-let-live social contract: in other words, a democratic constitution. The two previous Turkish “constitutions” were imposed by military juntas in 1961 and 1982. In response to popular demand, politicians have pledged to draw up a “civilian constitution” in the next Turkish parliament. Hopefully, all the different “nations” of Turkey will be able to realise that dream by making mutual concessions and gaining mutual benefits. Otherwise, they will continue to be haunted and hounded by the issues that divide them so harshly.

The upcoming general elections of June 2011 will be crucial in this regard. Polls suggest that the AKP will be the winner, but much will depend on how big its victory is. If the AKP has more than two-thirds of the seats in parliament, it will be able to write a new constitution on its own. That could provoke the secularists, and even the Kurdish and Turkish nationalists, and create sharp tensions. If the AKP wins fewer seats, on the other hand, it would be forced to reach a consensus with one or more of these opposition groups. This might be better for Turkey, which needs not only a stable government but also a rational opposition.

Ayşe Kadioğlu and Orhan Miroğlu

2

From oblivion to memory: Skeletons in the Turkish republican closet¹

“Nationalism is not based on common memory; it is rather based on common oblivion.” When Ernest Gellner uttered these words during a lecture at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara in December 1993, he struck a chord with the audience. Despite general acknowledgement that all nationalisms were the product of both memory and oblivion, the phantoms buried within Turkish national identity were rather understated in the literature. By the end of the 1990s, the processes that would release the memory genie from the bottle had been initiated. These processes have acquired a particular momentum in the past decade from a proliferation of academic studies, biographies, memoirs, novels, poetry, works of art and movies.

Remembering the atrocities committed in the name of homogeneity during the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the Turkish republic is an ongoing process. While some social groups embrace efforts to remember, others continue to adopt the official rhetoric of denial. Despite such divisions in society, it is possible to say that there has been a significant move in Turkey away from a culture of forgetting and the suppression of memory towards remembrance.

The past few years have seen an unsurpassed number of popular publications that have unravelled many suppressed and forgotten family histories. One of the pivotal books was titled *Anneannem* (My Grandmother, published in 2004). Its author, Fethiye Çetin, describes how, shortly before her grandmother passed away, she told her for the first time that she was born into an Armenian family. She was adopted by a Muslim family when her Armenian relatives faced deportation at the turn of the 20th century. By 2008, the personal stories of

¹ The first part of this essay was written by Ayşe Kadioğlu. The second part includes an interview with Orhan Miroğlu that was conducted by Kadioğlu. The interview was conducted in Turkish and translated into English by Kadioğlu.

several other Armenian women had been published. There were also books and films focusing on the fate of Kurdish women who were given up for adoption as babies to Turkish families by state authorities during the Dersim massacres of 1938. Two movies were also released to nationwide acclaim. The first, *Salkım Hanımın Taneleri* (Mrs. Salkım's Diamonds, 1999), was about the wealth tax imposed disproportionately by the government on non-Muslims in 1942. The second, *Güz Sancısı* (Pains of Autumn, 2009), portrayed the events of 6-7 September 1955 in Istanbul, when the shops and residences of thousands of non-Muslims were vandalised. A television drama series, *Bu Kalp Seni Unutur mu?* (Can This Heart Forget You?), shown on prime time in the autumn of 2009, portrayed the torturous reality of the Diyarbakır prison in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup.

In 2009, a group of public intellectuals issued an apology in which they said that their consciences could not accept the insensitivity and denial regarding the "Great Catastrophe" that was endured by Ottoman Armenians. The number of signatures on the website had reached 30,000 by the end of that year. A nationalist backlash also followed. The process of remembering went hand in hand with various constitutional and legal amendments such as the lifting of the ban on teaching and broadcasting in the Kurdish language. These measures also triggered a process of denationalisation of citizenship in Turkey.

In the aftermath of the 1980 military coup, there was a major assault on the political realm. In effect, politics became a crime in Turkey. An average apolitical upper-middle-class Turk could go about his or her life as normal, although there was a curfew and frequent police checks and random searches in major cities. However, for the average Kurd living in a southeastern city, life became dramatically difficult. The authorities launched a major crackdown on expressions of Kurdish identity. For example, a 1983 law made the utilisation of the Kurdish language illegal. Although this law was repealed in 1991, a ban on broadcasting and teaching in Kurdish survived until 2002, after which it was gradually repealed as part of EU accession reforms. In 2009, a state television channel began broadcasting in Kurdish.

The military coup of September 12, 1980 and subsequent three-year military rule officially ended with elections in November 1983 and the formation of a civilian government. Shortly before the elections, the former government (which had been established by the military) agreed a new law on emergency rule (*Olağanüstü Hal Kanunu*, or OHAL). This law gave the cabinet (which met under the chairmanship of the president instead of the prime minister)

the authority to declare martial law in certain provinces for a period of six months. Under this law, emergency rule was declared at different times in 14 provinces in southeast Turkey between 1987 and 2002. The PKK began its military operations in Turkey with attacks in the towns of Şemdinli and Eruh in August 1984.

In the period after 1980 and throughout the OHAL years, there were five different policy approaches in southeastern Turkey. First, the armed forces maintained a visible presence and engaged in military skirmishes with the PKK. Second, Kurds were subjected to unannounced searches, frequent checks, random arrests, prolonged detainment, arbitrary imprisonment, and inhumane treatment and grotesque forms of torture at Diyarbakır Prison. (Prime Minister Erdoğan recently acknowledged the atrocities committed there.) Third, Kurdish villages were placed under the control of guards who engaged in criminal acts such as arson, harassment, robbery, rape, armed attack and kidnapping. This generated a double pressure on Kurdish villagers, who were forced by the PKK to become members and/or accomplices while also being coerced by the state to work as village guards. Fourth, many villages were burned to the ground and millions of people forced to migrate to western provinces. Fifth, there were concerted efforts on the part of state authorities to replace Kurdish place names with Turkish ones, and prevent people from giving their children Kurdish names. Many regional boarding schools were established with the goal of Turkifying Kurdish children.

Thousands of Kurdish citizens were killed or “lost” in clandestine acts in Turkey in the 1990s. Today, the corpses of some of those “lost” citizens are being extracted from mass graves. In January, 12 such corpses were discovered in the province of Mutki, in Bitlis. As more and more bodies were dug up, it became increasingly apparent that the skeletons and phantoms in Turkish Republican closets would have to be faced. Still, in a country where *rakı* glasses are quite frequently lifted in a toast “to drink and forget”, it is no easy task to initiate a process of remembering.

Orhan Miroğlu is a living witness to the post-1980 era. He was an inmate at Diyarbakır Prison from 1982 to 1988. He was shot and seriously wounded in the assassination of a leading Kurdish intellectual, Musa Anter, at Diyarbakır in 1992. He is currently banned from participating in active politics. He has published eight important works – fiction, non-fiction, an autobiographical novel and letters from prison, all of them dealing with the Kurdish issue. In the interview below he addresses two critical questions:

Kadıoğlu: *The 1980s and 1990s were characterised by internal displacement, violence, and the random arrest, detainment, imprisonment and murder of thousands of Kurds. In 2009, the government announced plans to ease restrictions on the Kurds but did not live up to the expectations of many democrats. Are you now hopeful that the Kurdish issue can be addressed on a political level?*

Miroğlu: I am hopeful. Although there are still isolated acts of violence aimed at influencing upcoming elections, it is no longer possible to sustain the violence of the past. I am hopeful that, after the elections, we can address the Kurdish issue politically through a new constitution. This process will largely be determined by how the main actors, namely the BDP and the governing AKP, approach negotiations. They have failed to reach a consensus in recent years for a number of reasons.

After the 2007 elections, mainstream Kemalist parties on both the left and the right failed in the eyes of Kurdish voters. The AKP filled this vacuum, which inevitably cast the AKP as a rival of the BDP. Rather than seeking out dialogue in parliament, the BDP focused on this rivalry. For instance, the party boycotted a referendum on important constitutional amendments. It remained distant from the Ergenekon “deep state” trials that it should have followed more closely than any other political actor. Moreover, to the surprise of everyone, the BDP declared that it was unethical to invite the PKK to announce a ceasefire. This statement reignited the PKK’s violent campaign and 15 people died in three weeks. Two months before the elections, the BDP launched a campaign of civil disobedience and demanded an increase of the 10 percent threshold for national elections, mother tongue education programmes, the release of detained members of the KCK (the urban wing of the PKK), as well an end to military operations.

The AKP, on the other hand, halted the democratisation process initiated in 2009 with its “democratic opening”. It made no move to amend the electoral threshold, which would have gone some way to easing tensions. It also saw the BDP as a political rival. It is, however, necessary to look beyond this rivalry and address the Kurdish issue by seeking out an accord that rises above party politics. These are factors that make it difficult to address Turkey’s Kurdish issue. Yet there are still reasons to be hopeful.

It is clear to the Kurds that the Turkish state can no longer deny them their language and culture. Even the PKK’s political allies are now critical of

violence. The military is no longer the chief actor in the Kurdish issue. Some tensions among Kurds have been eased by openness and increased control over clandestine groups engaged in violence. Those who grew despondent at the state's clandestine acts are now demanding that the PKK sets in motion a process of normalisation. These moves are all highly significant. After the elections, the new parliament will debate a new constitution that will guarantee equal rights to all citizens and respect all languages and differences.

Kadioğlu: How can Turkish and Kurdish people face the skeletons in the Turkish Republican closet?

Miroğlu: They can face them by remembering the 1915 Armenian-Assyrian genocide, the 1938 mass annihilation of Dersim Kurds, and the more recent internal strife that has caused tremendous pain for our people. Both Turks and Kurds are like members of a society that woke up one day with amnesia. These people are now trying to wake up from a nightmarish past that they tried to forget. They are building a new memory. This process does not pervade all sections of society: there is still a lack of public support for trials involving clandestine state operations such as Ergenekon and Balyoz and the JITEM cases involving the murders of Kurdish civilians.

Kemalist and neo-unionist leftist actors have been quite successful in discrediting these trials both domestically and internationally. Evidence shown in the Hrant Dink murder case indicates that this assassination was an Ergenekon operation. But the case has not been legally linked to the Ergenekon trials. Complete silence surrounds the murders committed in Kurdish cities. Despite the trials, Turkey's efforts to come to terms with its past and confront the skeletons in its particular closet do not compare favourably with similar attempts in other countries.

For example, some of those detained as suspects in the Ergenekon case are now standing as CHP candidates in the election. This creates a deep unease among the population, which fears that the clandestine activities of the state will never be addressed. Many murder cases (including the assassination of Musa Anter in 1992, in which I was seriously wounded) are about to be closed when the statute of limitations expires. Around 1,000 people killed in Kurdish provinces were buried in mass graves – a new mass grave is discovered every day. Unfortunately, none of these excavations follow United Nations standards and DNA diagnostic procedures.

The Armenian and Kurdish issues are at the heart of Turkish efforts to come to terms with its past. Without doubt, the number of people who still believe in the lies and fabricated historical accounts are diminishing by the day. But this change in public perception has not yet influenced politicians. So far, calls for an official apology have gone unanswered. Instead, a very Turkish-style compromise appears to be in sight. If the political will is strong and the idea wins public support, it is possible that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission could be constituted within parliament. Such a measure would clearly represent a positive step forward.

CHALLENGES FOR DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

Şahin Alpay

3

Will Turkey veer towards authoritarianism without the EU anchor?

There is much interest in the West about where Turkey's politics is heading in the medium and long term. A recent workshop at New York University's Center for Global Affairs, which included both Turkish and American observers, suggested three alternatives. In two of them, Turkey veers towards authoritarianism, with either an Islamist or a secularist illiberal regime in place. But a third scenario – with which I largely agree – projected Turkey squarely on the road to a liberal and pluralist democracy.

The history of the republic founded on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire can be divided into three periods. The first, the founding period, was characterised by top-down reforms to build a secular Turkish nation under an authoritarian, single-party regime. After the Second World War, democratisation was driven by both external and internal pressures. It resulted in an illiberal democracy and multiparty system under the tutelage of the military and civilian bureaucracy, reinforced by military interventions throughout the Cold War. Authoritarian secularism kept religion under state control and restricted religious liberties while Turkifying and Sunnifying the multiethnic, multireligious population.

With the end of the Cold War, there was a transition towards a liberal and pluralist regime, triggered by bottom-up dynamics. First came the so-called Turgut Özal revolution in the early 1980s as the economy shifted from import substitution to a free market. As a consequence, a new business class arose in the Anatolian heartland. Culturally conservative and devoutly Muslim, it embraced liberal economics and democracy. It increasingly challenged the power of the mainly Istanbul-based big business, which was dependent on state protection and subsidies and was committed to the official ideology of Kemalism – that is, elitist secular nationalism.

The rise of the Anatolian bourgeoisie was among the factors that led to the split in

the late Necmettin Erbakan's moderately Islamist National Vision movement in the late 1990s and the founding of the AKP led by Erdoğan and his friends in 2001. Erbakan's Welfare Party mixed Islamist, nationalist and Third Worldist ideology to oppose integration with the EU and call for Turkey to unite the Islamic world. The "conservative democratic" AKP, on the other hand, embraced EU accession, along with a market democracy on European norms.

In parallel, religious leaders and movements, such as the Naqshibandi brotherhood and the Nurcu community, called for a liberal and globalised economy and polity. Most influential among those was the scholar Fethullah Gülen, who emphasised the moral and social aspects of Islam and regarded religion and science as complementary. He advocated democracy and human rights, secularism in the form of freedom of religion, respect for different beliefs and lifestyles, and the market economy; and he supported Turkish membership of the EU. Gülen encouraged his followers to start businesses, open schools and hospitals, and found charity associations and trusts in Turkey and across the globe. The movement's schools across several continents serve as Turkey's cultural and commercial bridges to about 120 countries.

A second factor facilitating the transition to European democracy was the critical discourse of liberal intellectuals. Harboured bitter memories of the military regime in 1980-83, they challenged Kemalist ideology and questioned the army's role in politics and the oppressive nature of official secularism and identity policies. Bolstered by the media, which became freer and more pluralistic from the early 1990s onwards, this discourse profoundly impacted the country's intellectual life. No subject, including the fate of the Ottoman Armenians during the First World War, was taboo.

Another key factor was the prospect of EU accession and Turkey's candidacy at the end of 1999. The AKP came to power in November 2002 by making the EU the centrepiece of its platform. The constitutional and legal reforms that ensued helped Turkey "sufficiently" fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria and begin accession negotiations in October 2005. This silent revolution advanced human rights, curbed the influence of the military, allowed broadcasts in Kurdish and ended the denial of Kurdish identity.

Accession negotiations have since come to a halt for well-known reasons. One was the stalling of the reform process in Turkey – mainly as a consequence of domestic turmoil between 2006 and 2008, due to military coup attempts and the closure case against the AKP in the Constitutional Court. Reforms picked up only

after coup schemes failed. The constitutional amendments adopted by a large margin in a referendum on September 12, 2010, curbed the tutelary powers of the military and judiciary. On January 1, 2009, the public broadcasting corporation's channel TRT 6 started 24-hour broadcasts in Kurdish. In August, Ankara unveiled its "Kurdish initiative", which was aimed at improving relations with the Kurdish regional government in Iraq, by meeting the demands of the Kurds and disarming the PKK. Recently, Erdoğan confirmed that the government is involved in talks with imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan as part of the process. Yet it is too early to declare success or failure.

As the country prepares for the parliamentary elections on June 12, 2011, the AKP government has declared that the passage of a new, democratic constitution is a top priority. Polls suggest that the AKP is heading for a third term, primarily because of continued economic growth. However, criticism of the AKP government is increasing. Some of this comes from those who were opposed to the party from the outset: committed to Kemalism and supportive of military and judicial coup attempts, they saw the AKP as an authoritarian Islamist regime on the Iranian model or as a civilian dictatorship on the Russian model with the support of the conservative-religious majority bloc.

These critics argue that the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer court cases were an attempt by police officers, prosecutors and judges taking orders from the Gülen movement to silence the opposition; that the tax-evasion prosecution against the Doğan media group was initiated by the authorities to create an atmosphere ("empire") of fear and to silence criticism; and that "social pressures" by the AKP and Gülen are spreading intolerance and discrimination against people who do not share a conservative-religious lifestyle. But there is little credible evidence for these claims.

However, those who were previously supportive of the AKP have also begun to criticise it. They fear that the AKP is no longer interested in reforms but rather simply in consolidating power through a reconciliation with the Kemalist military and judicial establishment whose powers it has curbed. They see proof of this in Erdoğan's flirtation with the idea of a presidential system, even though President Gül and Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç are not in favour of this. But the real test of criticism of Erdoğan and the AKP will be whether the prime minister pushes for the adoption of a new democratic constitution, as he has promised, and whether it will conform to the norms of "advanced democracy" that he has been talking about.

Whatever its failures and shortcomings, however, the AKP government has succeeded in achieving macroeconomic stability and an average of 6-7 percent annual growth, which has roughly tripled per capita income from little above \$3,000 in 2002 to about \$10,000 in 2010. This healthy and modernised economy has boosted expectations of democratic consolidation in both state and society. Common people have enjoyed the benefits of broader freedom and democracy and expanding welfare, and are pressing politicians to continue with modernisation and democratisation. If they fail to meet those demands, governments will not stay in power.

Politically, economically and culturally, Turkey is also far more open than it was a decade ago. Despite restrictive provisions in the Anti-Terror Law, the Penal Code and the Press Law, a broad and free debate is now taking place. Investigative journalism – led by the daily newspaper *Taraf*, which was launched in 2007 – has exposed military coup plots and the armed forces' shortcomings in coping with the PKK insurgency. Such coverage has amplified popular demands for the military to keep to its professional duties. There are signs that a growing section of the military is also weary of politics. Legislation curbing the tutelary prerogatives, the prosecution of coup plotters (apparently endorsed by the high command) and, most importantly, the rising consensus among military ranks against political involvement is preventing the risk of future intervention and therefore the threat of secularist authoritarianism.

The prospect of election-based authoritarianism based on the alliance between the AKP and various religious movements is not convincing. Devout religiosity may be widespread, especially among the Sunni majority, but there is little support for a Sharia-based regime. Many members of the National Vision Movement (Turkey's original Islamist movement) have joined the AKP, and two or three of the other parties that have emerged from splits in that movement cannot even be described as Islamist.

Turkey has a traditionally conservative-religious society, and rapid socioeconomic change has strengthened the role of religion in people's lives. The authoritarian secularist policies of the Kemalist state have not been able to curb the influence of religious brotherhoods, communities and faith-based movements. The transformation of Turkey has spread interpretations of Islam that are compatible with modernity and also advance secularisation – that is, the genuine separation of religion and politics. Moreover, the profound differences between those promoting Islamic values hinder the emergence of a unified bloc.

Popular demands for freedom and democracy, which have been enhanced by the favourable global environment since the end of the Cold War, affect not only the government but also opposition groups. A good example is the PKK. Having started in the late 1970s with the aim of uniting all Kurds across the Middle East in a Marxist-Leninist state, it has now largely abandoned its communist and secessionist discourse in favour of regional autonomy within Turkey. A number of factors account for this: the decline of Marxism-Leninism; the widespread dislike of secessionism by Kurds in the western, Turk-dominated regions; the state's tentative steps to recognise Kurdish identity as part of its EU agenda; and the participation of pro-Kurdish parties such as the BDP in local government. The BDP, which wins 6-7 percent of the national vote, decided to take part in the parliamentary elections in 2007. A potential deal between the AKP government and the PKK to end the armed insurgency will certainly boost Turkey's hopes of consolidating democracy.

The CHP has also changed as a result of popular pressure. Deniz Baykal's clique, which dominated the party since it was reconvened in the early 1990s and committed itself entirely to the Kemalism of the tutelage regime, ignored the key challenges to the country, including the Kurdish question and the popular demands for freedom and justice, and based its opposition to the AKP on the claim that "secularism was in danger". It urged the military and civilian bureaucracy to fight the AKP government, supported the army's "e-memorandum" against the election of Abdullah Gül as president in April 2007, and, alongside the military, put pressure on the Constitutional Court to annul Gül's election a month later. The electorate's reaction to interference with the elections in July 2007 also dealt the CHP a heavy blow. Yet the party backed the chief prosecutor's appeal to the Constitutional Court in March 2008 for the AKP's closure. Baykal, who did not hesitate to declare himself an "advocate" of the Ergenekon network, was forced to resign in May 2010 over an affair with a CHP deputy.

The new party leader was Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, its candidate for Istanbul mayorship in 2009, who pledged to build a "new CHP". Although he was elected with the support of part of the Baykal clique, Kılıçdaroğlu's first move as leader was to remove from the executive board party apparatchiks loyal to Baykal and his associate Önder Sav, the secretary-general. In April 2011, he eliminated the clique, except for Baykal himself, from the party's list of nominees for the parliamentary elections. After consolidating power, Kılıçdaroğlu moved to refresh the party's discourse. Significantly, he dropped the "secularism is in danger" litany and opened the CHP platform to popular demands. The election manifesto promises a new democratic constitution; the removal of all obstacles to the free expression

of Kurdish identity; equal citizenship rights for the Alevi; strengthening of local government in line with European norms; shortening of compulsory military service; and a heavy focus on economic development and social welfare. Whether the CHP sticks to its new credo remains to be seen, but it seems that Kılıçdaroğlu is pursuing a divorce with the bureaucratic tutelage regime. His leadership of the CHP also increases the prospects for cross-party cooperation in drafting Turkey's new constitution.

In conclusion, Turkey can be expected to continue its progress towards consolidating a liberal and pluralist democracy, even if the road ahead is not smooth. Had the EU remained united in supporting its accession, Turkey could have moved faster with reforms to meet the membership criteria. The accession process has, unfortunately, stalled. But the dynamic it helped set off, along with other drivers discussed above, continues to push forward the democratisation of Turkey.

Hakan Altınay

Moving parts

4

It's been a good decade for Turkey. The Turkish economy grew from \$200 billion in 2001 to \$800 billion in 2011 and, according to forecasts by the *Economist*, is set to grow faster than the eurozone, the UK and the US in 2011 and 2012. Public debt has shrunk from 75 percent of GDP to 40 percent. Real interest rates have dropped from a whopping 35 percent to 2 percent, and Turkey's risk premium is now lower than that of all her southern European neighbours. Once a source of national anxiety and a playground for mafioso practices, the modern Turkish banking system is now first rate, and weathered the 2008 crisis with no casualties and handsome profits.

No longer required to roll over large public debt and with high real interest rates, Turkey had the funds to adopt universal health care and impressive social policies, and along the way witnessed a significant drop in its Gini inequality index. Moreover, in the last 10 years, Turkey has removed the death penalty from its books; ended a state of emergency that had been in place for 25 years; ended restrictions on broadcasting in the Kurdish language; recognised the European Court of Human Rights' decisions as the basis for retrials in Turkey; abolished incommunicado detentions and the effective impunity of torturers; eliminated reduced sentences for honour crimes; and ended the extraordinary privileges of the military.

Turkey's troubled relations with many of her neighbours have also improved. A visa-free travel agreement now exists between Turkey and Georgia, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Russia and Syria; Ukraine may be next. Turkey has enhanced its soft power vis-à-vis her neighbours.² The basic school curriculum was overhauled to move away from rote learning and towards a modicum of critical thinking, and

² For a discussion of Turkey's soft power, see Hakan Altınay, "Turkey's Soft Power: An Unpolished Gem or an Elusive Mirage?", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No. 2, April-June, 2008.

early childhood education was dramatically expanded. Compared to 2001, the Turkey of 2011 is a wealthier, more open, freer, more democratic, fairer and more peaceful country.

Whither the EU?

The EU has played a key role in this leap forward. FDI in Turkey increased fourfold immediately after the 2004 decision to start membership negotiations. The prospect of EU accession provided much-needed credibility and served to anchor Turkey's economic future. The Copenhagen criteria, in turn, provided the parallel roadmap for Turkey's political transformation. Between 2002 and 2004, political parties with diverse ideologies and priorities agreed to support several waves of EU political reforms.

Recently, the EU's vital role in Turkey's advancement has become more difficult to remember because just as this relationship was producing results, Nicolas Sarkozy was elected president of France. Unlike other sceptical leaders in Europe, not only did Sarkozy question the desirability of Turkish accession, but he went as far as to reject Turkey's eligibility for membership. The fact that Turkey's eligibility for membership had been confirmed unanimously in 1989, 1999, 2002 and 2005 did not trouble President Sarkozy, and his capricious obstructionism has not, to date, received the reprimand it deserves from his European peers.³

To be sure, Turkey has not done nearly enough to engage the European public or to explain how the nation will contribute to the EU project. Turks frequently argue that they will correct the European demographic predicament and contribute to its energy security, but both of these arguments have a dubious empirical basis. Turkey does have a younger population and is at a different state of demographic transition, but new university graduates in Turkey have one of the highest unemployment rates in the OECD. Turkey is not adequately preparing its youth for the domestic labour market, let alone the European labour market. Turkey also is more reliant on Russian hydrocarbons than many countries in Western Europe, so it is not a foregone conclusion that Turkey can necessarily boost European energy security. The real prize that Turkey brings to the table is enhancing Europe's soft power in the region, but realising that potential requires a radical rethink on both

³ For a reprimand from civil society, see Altınay, Bayart, Bobinski, Hughes, Kral, Tocci and Torreblanca, "Sarkozy's blithe inconsistency over Turkey puts EU credibility at risk", letter to the *Financial Times*, 6 September 2007. Since then, we have witnessed bizarre moves such as altering the map of Europe engraved on euro coins so that Cyprus can be included without any sign of Turkey – a comical legerdemain.

sides. Currently, EU-Turkey relations call to mind the old Soviet joke of workers pretending to work and bosses pretending to pay them: the European Commission pretends that accession is possible, and Turkey plays along with this pretence.

A normative case for Turkish accession

To some, the EU is the visionary project of an ever-expanding realm of peace, prosperity and liberty. To others, it is simply a way of advancing petty national interests under the guise of higher and more enlightened goals. The advocates of the first view take pleasure and comfort in quoting Jean Monnet. Those who take the latter view point out that in the EU everyone wants to share what they do not have: for the UK, a continental market; for France, a monetary policy; for Germany, a foreign policy; and for everyone else, global relevance. Both of these narratives are partially true: integration could not have been achieved if it did not advance member states' core interests; at the same time, however, this novel and bold project could not have progressed without dramatically transforming member states' understanding of their national interest through a normative horizon.

Although the debate about Turkish accession has been going on for more than 10 years, there is not yet a normative case for Turkish accession. All previous accessions have had a more visible normative backdrop: the accession of southern Europe was not unrelated to the imperative of solidarity with new democracies; and eastern enlargement was perceived as a way of reaching out to estranged, and sometimes abused, neighbours. But no one has made a similar case for Turkish accession.

Given that the European project is first and foremost aimed at promoting peace, this could be the basis for a normative argument. Over the past century, Turkey's predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, deployed troops within the current territories of two member states, Bulgaria and Greece. Turkey continues to have troops in Cyprus which are not welcomed by Greek Cypriots. Conversely, five current member states of the EU – Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy and the United Kingdom – have at some point over the past century deployed troops in what is today's Turkey. Instead of initiating a process of self-reflection, none of these nations has admitted these deployments were wrong, although in some cases the capital city at the time was occupied for several years.

The history of European attitudes and prejudices towards “the East” are due for a re-examination. Martin Luther described the Turks as the anti-Christ and the

agents of the devil. Voltaire and Lord Byron argued passionately in favour of chasing Turkish barbarians out of Europe. In a rather telling and illustrative narrative, the nineteenth-century British prime minister William Gladstone concluded that the Turks were “upon on the whole, from the black day when they first entered Europe, the one great anti-human specimen of humanity”. Unsurprisingly, in view of this thesis, Gladstone demanded that Europe should be thoroughly cleansed of the Turks.⁴ Here lies another normative imperative: The gatekeepers of the European normative agenda must now explicitly confront Europe’s orientalism. In order to repudiate its previous misdeeds, Europe must treat Turkey as an equal and welcome partner.

At the same time, Turkey has to show to friend and foe alike that it has the wherewithal to be a part of the European normative space. In recent years, Turkish society has started to debate difficult chapters of its history: the fate of the Ottoman Armenians; the 1955 pogroms against the Greeks of Istanbul; and the horror of Diyarbakır Prison throughout the 1980s. Some have also taken the bold step of assuming responsibility. This is indeed very encouraging, but still does not go far enough. Turkey says it wants to join the EU and also be an actor on the world stage through membership of the UN Security Council and the G-20, but its education system reinforces existing xenophobia and inculcates a very cynical, might-is-right view of the world. The meta-narrative in textbooks is Hobbesian and, as a result, comparative surveys have shown that Turks display relatively high levels of scepticism towards other nations.⁵

Making a normative case for Turkish accession will not be an easy task and requires both sides to act decisively. Perhaps because they had a longer list of pending issues, Turkish progressives seem to be a step ahead. The key question now is whether intellectual and progressive figures in Europe will reciprocate. If they do, each side could derive courage from the convictions of the other, forming a virtuous circle. If this happens, it could be the century’s greatest Nobel Peace Prize. If not, Turkey will continue to muddle along; the EU will not be nearly as relevant to Turkey’s evolution as it once was.⁶

4 The only thing more disturbing than reading this 1876 manuscript in 2011 is the fact that no critique of it and its underlying mentality, along the lines of Edward Said’s forceful critique of “orientalism”, has yet emerged from Europe. Instead of a critique of Gladstone’s discourse, we have former British Prime Minister Tony Blair declaring Gladstone to be one of his political heroes.

5 Turkey is not a party to the statute of the International Criminal Court and is one of the few countries that has still not associated itself with the Copenhagen Climate Accords.

6 Erdoğan’s April 2011 address to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe provided a foretaste of what that future may look like. Erdoğan expressed in less than cordial terms that he had no intention of seeking European views and guidance on whether the 10 percent threshold for parliamentary representation was acceptable. In an eerie replay of *L’état, c’est moi*, Erdoğan also noted that he was the personal guarantor of minority rights in Turkey.

The puzzle that is the future

Having presided over Turkey's impressive leap forward, Prime Minister Erdoğan is supremely confident. To be sure, his temperament was never one of an unabated democrat; he was always more of a reluctant democrat. But he has become increasingly authoritarian over the last three years. He repeatedly tells people how many children to have, which newspapers to read, and to consume grapes rather than wine. He threatens to ban NGOs that he does not like. He explicitly holds media owners responsible for their editorial practices and columnists' views, and expects them to fire anyone whose views they do not share. Doğan Group, the largest and most pluralist media group, has attracted his sustained wrath and was fined several times their market capitalisation for back taxes. All other media owners drew their own lessons from the Doğan affair and a troubling practice of self-censorship has since prevailed.

In a sense, the Turkish predicament is not that unique. Many successful leaders have succumbed to hubris and become intoxicated with power and increasingly intolerant of dissent. What makes the current state of Turkish affairs bizarre is the general acquiescence among Turkish liberals in the face of this type of authoritarianism. Turkish liberals have decided that the armed forces are the main – and, for some, the only – impediment to a liberal democracy in Turkey. To be sure, the Turkish armed forces have a worse than chequered history, and have threatened their government with a coup as recently as 2007. Liberals, in turn, have made easy alliances with all kinds of actors intent on pushing the armed forces back, and frequently play down or ignore the illiberal tactics of their allies. The result has been a peculiar constellation in which many liberals ignore bona fide and persistent evidence of the ostracism of non-pious people in the Turkish heartland; cases of manufactured evidence in key political trials; and character assassinations and intimidation of undesirable dissidents. If Turkey is to continue its evolution towards a vibrant open society, Turkish liberals will need to stop trading cardinal maxims of the liberal canon for short-term expediency.

While Erdoğan is becoming increasingly authoritarian and losing interest in the EU, the opposition in Turkey is finally finding its European bearings. Turkey had been suffering from the absence of a capable opposition for several years. The former CHP was xenophobic and reactionary.⁷ The new CHP under Kemal

⁷ For a relatively unsuccessful attempt at demonstrating how the EU serves sceptical secularists, see Hakan Altınay and Kalypso Nicolaïdis, "Why the European Union strengthens Turkish secularism", *OpenDemocracy*, 3 September 2008, available at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/the-european-union-and-turkey-strengthening-secularism>.

Kılıçdaroğlu is reengaging with the EU, producing creative social policy options, and most importantly shedding the loathsome practice of whitewashing the military's illegitimate interventions. It is unclear whether the CHP will persevere and prosper in its new vocation. If it does, it will improve the health of Turkish democracy, and will even help Erdoğan as a constructive corrective.

In the unlikely event of finding its own purpose and bearings, the EU can provide an effective and constructive reference point for all political camps in Turkey. The prospect of EU accession could provide the same kind of soothing backdrop as it did for Spain as it faced its demons.⁸ The work of the Independent Commission on Turkey deserves full acclaim in this regard.⁹ With its 2004 and 2009 reports, the Independent Commission has been a beacon of thorough analysis and principled positions. Europe and Turkey have much to gain from this kind of engagement, and need more of the same.

⁸ For a discussion on Spain and Turkey, see William Chislett, *Spanish Trajectory: A Source of Inspiration for Turkey?*, Open Society Institute, Turkey, 2008.

⁹ On the Independent Commission, see <http://www.independentcommissiononturkey.org/>.

Osman Baydemir
The “we know best”
democracy

5

The simplest definition of democracy is government by the people. This comes as close as possible to the “ideal” form of government in the present age. To be democratic is to engage in dialogue, which enables parties to find a common denominator through discussion and by tolerating differences. To lawyers, this common denominator is the social contract in a generalised and legally binding form – that is, the constitution. The “social contract” that has shaped Turkey’s democracy and governed its 70 million-strong population is the constitution created after the military coup of September 12, 1980.

When discussing democracy in Turkey, there are a plethora of questions to consider. Are people able to govern themselves and effectively participate in running public affairs in Turkey? Is the “rule of law” in existence and is there a proactive and impartial judiciary? Are the media free and unbiased? Do political parties practice internal democracy? Are candidates elected by party members or selected by party leaders? Are differences in identities, cultures, mother tongues and beliefs recognised? Is there fairness in the distribution of income? Are developmental gaps between regions at an acceptable level and are authorities pursuing policies to address these differences? Do women have a voice in all aspects of life? Is there an effective policy against so-called honour killings?

These questions are all critical. But what should be the benchmark for judging democracy in Turkey: neighbouring countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Libya and Egypt or the democracies within the EU? Of course, Turkey fares well when compared to flawed regimes and deficient democracies. But Turkey cannot simply use the EU and the US’s support for the AKP and efforts to present Turkey as a model to Islamic parties in the Arab world as proof that it is a mature democracy. Rather, Turkey is, in my opinion, a democracy of the ruling party, in which rights are not shared by all.

For those who are not in power, there is little democracy. There is no legal protection for workers whose factories are closed down, for women who are murdered by their husbands, and for children given 100-year jail sentences for throwing stones at armed policemen, or for regions in which the natural environment has been destroyed. The most significant cause of insecurity is the fact that, from the day it was founded, the republic has been informed by a belief that “the people do not know what is best for them, but we do”. This has shaped efforts to modernise and then democratise society from the top down, using radical methods to realise an exclusionist enlightenment mission.

This top-down approach to democracy has simply been passed down from republican elites to the AKP. Like its predecessor, the AKP government asserts that “we know best”. People have an impression that the AKP represents a soft form of liberal piety because it stood for change and shows respect to women who do not wear the headscarf and nominates them for candidacy. However, the AKP government’s practices are very much at odds with its democratic image. Many now believe that the party is driven by authoritarian thinking. By winning a parliamentary majority, the AKP aims to establish full hegemony, which entitles it to the discretionary use of power. The AKP’s position in the new constitutional debate as and on constitutional amendments passed in parliament cannot be seen as democratic.

A fundamental principle of democracy is recognition of “the other”. The party’s support of the 10 percent electoral threshold, which prevents the formation of coalition governments and means that the will of the people – foremost of the Kurds – is not fairly reflected in parliament. Prime Minister Erdoğan believes neither in the essence of democracy nor in elections but above all in the principle of subordination. The presidential system he pursues fosters this culture of submissiveness. Looking back at nine years of AKP rule, it is evident that the party has established control over a great section of the business community. It also put pressure on TÜSİAD to not take a stance in the constitutional referendum of September 2010.

Virtually no section of society, from NGOs to newspaper columnists, has been spared the threats of Prime Minister Erdoğan. A significant section of the media is now controlled by the ruling party, with the rest brought into line with tax fines. Erdoğan has also consolidated his hold over the academic community, the police force, the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors, and even over the last bulwark of Kemalism, the Constitutional Court.

Without a credible opposition, there can be no real democracy. But can the CHP now evolve into a credible democratic opposition force? How has the CHP worked to defend democracy during the nine years of AKP rule? Can we ignore the CHP's support for military tutelage, its defence of the army, and Baykal's advocacy of Ergenekon suspects? While battling the AKP's "cosmetic democracy", has the CHP not inadvertently strengthened the government and helped it to veer off the path to democracy? Before asking whether Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu will effectively oppose the AKP, or whether the CHP's new leader will turn out to be nothing more than a comic-book character, we must consider what kind of political culture the AKP has fostered over the years.

It would not be erroneous to conclude that Turkey's democracy is not consolidated but partisan. Whenever the AKP has taken a step forward in the process of democratisation, it has been followed by two steps back. Efforts to resolve the Kurdish issue are a case in point. For instance, although the constitution was amended to grant more rights to the country's Kurdish population, the Democratic Society Party (DTP) was subsequently banned by the Constitutional Court. On the one hand, the government launches a "democratic initiative" urging its compatriots to "leave the mountains and come to the plains to engage in politics"; on the other, it orders the arrest and detention of more than 2,000 Kurdish politicians, mayors, NGO activists and members of women's movements. Unsurprisingly, the entire Kurdish opposition movement perceives the AKP as unreliable. There is a stark contradiction between statements and actions. The Kurdish opposition rightly defines the AKP's brand of democracy as a "democracy for the party's own use".

There are two principal yardsticks by which to measure present-day Turkey's democratic achievements. The first is the constitution, a product of military intervention in 1980. The second is the interpretation of state-citizen relations. The populace is still seen as a collection of serfs and vassals, a mindset inherited from the Ottomans but reinforced by Kemalism in the republican era. As a popular saying has it, "God rules above and the state on earth". No Turkish government, including that of the AKP, has ever believed that the people rule on earth or the state serves the public.

This mentality prevails in all laws, government institutions, the judiciary, the executive and the legislature. The strength of this cultural disposition was reflected in a statement by the director-general of Turkey's public broadcaster TRT, who said: "We opened TRT 6 [a channel that broadcasts in Kurdish] not because people asked for it but because the state decided it appropriate." (In

fact, recognition of the cultural rights of the Kurds was required by the EU.) In Turkey, reforms are not undertaken for the good of the public but for the state's own benefit. This undermines the very idea of reform.

Is it possible to say that Turkey has gained an internal momentum in its democratisation process? One needs to assess the CHP's vision and whether the party seeks to make a fresh start on issues such as the status of the Kurds, the Alevi, the headscarf and minorities. Before it engages with these challenges, however, the party under Kılıçdaroğlu's leadership must come to terms with the fact that the way to government is not through the army barracks. The CHP has to decide whether it is the founding party of the Kemalist republic or the protector of the status quo. There is no essential difference between Kılıçdaroğlu or Baykal if the CHP sticks to the latter option. If this is the case, it can neither challenge the AKP nor maintain the ruling party's democratic trajectory by acting as a credible opposition.

If it decides to claim the mantle of the founding party of the republic, this would first necessitate finding a settlement with another founding actor, the Kurds. Mustafa Kemal's republic has to acknowledge its two fundamental mistakes: the denial of Kurdish identity and the prohibition of religiosity. The constitution of 1924 was grounded in misguided assertions and sparked decades of Turkification policies, the notion of a single ethnicity, revolts and bloody suppressions, loss of life, and fear of secessionism. This legacy has cost the people of this country almost a century.

We live in a country in which the prime minister was once imprisoned because he read a poem but has hauled hundreds of writers through the courts during his time in office. We live in a country in which the BDP enjoys the largest support of any party among the Kurdish voters but has to back independent candidates because the electoral threshold prevents it from entering parliament. We live in a country in which Kurdish politicians and mayors have been imprisoned on trumped-up charges and are not allowed to defend themselves in their mother tongue. We live in a country in which Kurdish children are tried in court for shouting slogans and throwing stones. We live in a country in which journalists, writers and cartoonists face fines of astronomic proportions. We live in a country in which women are subjected to violence and are murdered in the name of "honour". We live in a country in which environmentalists who oppose the building of dams that will submerge ancient heritage sites such as Hasankeyf and Zeugma are branded as "traitors".

It is clear that the unconditional support that the EU has given to the AKP government over the last two terms has not strengthened Turkish democracy. As long as no one is asking why the accession process is not being pursued with sustained enthusiasm and as long as no new policies are being brought to the table, it is impossible to believe that that EU will be a catalyst for change within Turkey.

The AKP and the CHP differ neither in their conceptual approach to democracy nor in their approach towards the Kurds. The construction of democracy in Turkey cannot be achieved by a single actor. A second republic, built on democracy and the rule of law and in conformity with European values, will certainly be attained. Deviations and backsliding have been a feature of Turkish history. The essential point is that the principles and core values of democracy and the dynamics of democratisation should remain unfettered by conjunctural change. Democratisation, demilitarisation, the search for non-violent solutions to challenges, and contribution to the processes of conflict resolution should be the main principles driving EU-Turkey relations.

Consequently, Turkey today is in crucial need of democracy but faces severe problems blocking its realisation. The matter is too existential in nature to be dependent on the power of individuals or ruling parties. Democratic transformation is of great urgency today for Kurds, for women, for non-Muslims, for the Alevi and for all those who have been marginalised as “others”.

FOREIGN POLICY: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Ibrahim Kaln

Turkish foreign policy in 2011: an assessment

The new dynamism in Turkish foreign policy over the last decade has prompted a range of questions – some well-informed, some rhetorical. Is Turkey’s recent engagement in multiple regions linked to the AKP’s domestic objectives? Is the newfound interest in the Middle East a sign of “Islamisation” or of the aspiration for regional political and economic leadership? If Turkey is indeed diversifying its external relations, why and how is it going about this?

To answer such questions, one needs to understand the changes in Turkish domestic politics, in surrounding regions and in the global order over the first decade of the 21st century. To explain Turkey’s changing foreign policy, I shall examine three interrelated issues: first, the larger geostrategic context shaping Turkish foreign relations; second, the overarching goals and principles of the new mindset propelling Turkey into new areas of influence and engagement; and third, the novel instruments and mechanisms employed in reconfiguring the political and diplomatic environment in neighbouring areas.

A new context

New geopolitical realities have compelled Turkey, like many other countries, to rethink its strategic priorities. The end of the Cold War has given birth not to a new order but to a world pulled in various competing directions. Multiple modernities have challenged old centres of power to create new spheres of influence. We have seen a transition from the classical, Europe-bound notion of modernisation to a free-floating, multi-centred globalisation. The intellectual horizon of the globe as a whole has moved beyond the binary oppositions of Western modernity in a quest for a genuinely pluralistic, egalitarian and cosmopolitan order.

The axis of the world economy is slowly but steadily shifting towards Asia, with China and India leading the way. Other emergent poles such as Brazil and Turkey are also expanding their share of global GDP and earning a rightful place in the G-20. A similar dynamic is also being played out in the socio-cultural field. From the Arab world to Latin America, new social agents are promoting powerful and defiant ideas with self-confidence and via influential networks. Young technology-savvy generations are challenging the Eurocentric and Orientalist presuppositions of the 20th century. The Arab Spring is one of the most spectacular instances of the way that the cultural order is being reshuffled and all forms of subtle or explicit discrimination and racism transcended.

It is within this larger context that Turkey's domestic politics has undergone substantial transformation: from a security-based and exclusivist ideology to a freedom-oriented, inclusive and confident outlook. Military coups, subversive civilian-military relations, the Kurdish problem, religious minorities, civil liberties, freedom of religion, economic inequality, the development gap and a host of other problems have for decades been either dismissed as a non-issue or addressed using force. Relations with neighbours have been marked by trauma. This practice of misjudging issues through a misguided notion of national security has cost Turkey dearly. But global changes have forced Turkey to reorder its priorities by combining ideology and realpolitik.

The country's strategic horizon and geopolitical imagination is now widening, with new directions, approaches and possibilities presenting themselves. From the Balkans and the Caucasus to the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa and Latin America, an increasingly inclusive notion of geography is reshaping the mental maps of policymakers, diplomats, NGOs, companies and other social actors. This is an historic opportunity to overcome old animosities with its immediate neighbourhood. Most Turkish actors no longer believe that joining the EU or good relations with the US are incompatible with engagement in the Middle East or elsewhere. Such binary frameworks are not only counterproductive but also unsustainable. Instead, an inclusive and multi-dimensional domestic and foreign policy is becoming possible and even inevitable.

Prime Minister Erdoğan's bold leadership has opened up new avenues. Seeking to create a new form of "conservative modernity" out of Turkey's chequered experience of top-down modernisation, he has embraced democracy, human rights and the rule of law without giving up on the traditional, conservative values of Turkish-Islamic culture. The AKP has sought a middle path between globalism and regionalism, development and historical memory, contemporary

institutions and traditional values, and a host of other binary oppositions that have marked much of Turkey's modernisation over the past two centuries.

The most eloquent expression of this new approach is Ahmet Davutoğlu's book *Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position* (2001). To Davutoğlu, Turkey's location across critical fault lines uniting the Eurasian landmass with the Middle East and North Africa gives it a voice on key issues concerning global order. It is reinforced by its historical and cultural ties within the former confines of the Ottoman Empire securing a position for Turkey as the region's natural powerhouse. While republican elites saw history and geography as a burden, they are now seen as a strategic asset. The focus on the nation state as the principal actor is replaced by a new civilisational outlook – bringing a cultural, historical and normative dimension to international relations. This is best illustrated by the Alliance of Civilizations co-chaired by Turkey and Spain under the auspices of the UN.

Goals and principles

While it is a truism that material necessities shape nations' foreign policies, the definition of national interest depends on a deliberative process of what constitutes a priority. Threats to security are not immutable and interests are not immune to change or interpretation. The Turkish debate on national interests and threats has evolved considerably in the 2000s. While the establishment has clung to ossified Cold War definitions, alternative concepts have emerged to open new possibilities. Domestically, the Kurdish and the Alevi issues, freedom of religion and confessional minorities have ceased to be matters of national security. Neighbours such as Russia, Syria, Greece and Armenia are no longer enemies. This doctrinal shift is one of the most profound outcomes of the process of normalisation and the change in self-perception in Turkey.

There are four main goals underpinning Turkey's new foreign policy: security, freedom, prosperity and identity. What is striking is that those goals can only be attained if they are shared by others in a healthy form of interdependence. A policy of "mutual empowerment" strikes a balance between security and freedom, while sharing wealth and addressing issues of identity. Turkey cannot claim to be safe if one or more of its neighbours are beset by civil war. It can only serve as the region's economic powerhouse if full integration with neighbours has been achieved.

Security underscores the importance of order as a basic requirement for any polity before it addresses issues of justice and equality. Such understanding has long influenced but also limited Turkey's ability to deepen democracy and political freedoms. In the name of security, the military coups of 1960, 1971 and 1980 compromised basic civil liberties. The result was a handicapped democracy under military tutelage. Today, a different notion is emerging in Turkey. Security is neither limited to the state apparatus nor is there a trade-off between democracy and freedom. This new outlook, which emphasises both security and freedom, reflects society's new sensitivities. It is now widely accepted that security without freedom leads to authoritarianism, and freedom without security invites chaos and instability.

These twin values extend from domestic civilian-military relations to foreign and defence policy, and guide Turkey's regional and global engagements. While maintaining a non-interventionist stance, policymakers in Ankara stress the importance of the freedom-security linkage for other countries as well. This is one of the reasons for the lively debate on the Turkish model in the Arab world. To guarantee the security of its citizens and the safety of its borders against the PKK, Turkey has expanded civil liberties and democratic rights. It is fair to say that the AKP government's experience has been largely successful. Yet it is also true that the fragile balance between security and democracy still needs improvement.

Economic strength was always crucial but has become even more important in an age of globalisation. Generating and sharing wealth form a key part of Turkey's new outlook as the world's 17th-largest and Europe's sixth-largest economy. As the country's economic interests expand into several continents, policymakers work closely with the business community, prompting analysts to use the "trading state" label to describe the symbiosis between trade and foreign policy. This works in tandem with policies to deepen economic integration with neighbours. Such a policy of mutual empowerment has benefited both Turkey and its partners in the Middle East, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and Central Asia. Turkey also continues to maintain its strong trade ties with the EU.

Identity – in other words, a nation's self-perception with regard to history and its place in the world order – is also an essential issue. Turkey's new foreign policy is leaving behind the classical model of top-down, ideology-driven modernisation and opting for a multi-directional, decentralised and interest-driven outlook. It posits that all nations are equal in shaping history and demand an equal and fair

voice in regional and global affairs. A more egalitarian and fair global order is central to the new geopolitical *imaginaire* in places as diverse as Turkey, India, Brazil and South Africa. The global order is being restructured as emerging powers demand more justice and equality in regional and global institutions such as the UN, the IMF and the World Bank.

Instruments

To achieve these goals, Turkish policymakers employ four key instruments: engaging all political actors, supporting democratic processes, economic integration, and fostering cultural and people-to-people relations. They are implemented in partnership by state agencies and non-state actors including NGOs, the media and the business community.

Engaging all actors in difficult political environments has become one of the visible and controversial aspects of the AKP's foreign policy. Normalisation with Syria, initiating dialogue with Hamas in Palestine, engaging Hezbollah in Lebanon and talking to various Sunni groups in Iraq have given Turkey a certain weight in regional affairs but also brought new responsibilities. Turkey's mediation efforts, assisted by this policy of engagement, have drawn criticism in the West.

As regards the support for democratic processes, Turkey has respected the results of elections in Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Iran and elsewhere, and urged all players to abide by their respective legal systems. Turkey supported the Hamas government after the movement won Palestinian elections in 2006, though Western countries, led by the then US administration, refused to do so. Turkey's support for democracy became particularly relevant following the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. Currently, Turkey is seeking a diplomatic solution to the conflict in Libya, talking to all sides to facilitate a transition to a new multi-party system. Similarly, Turkey is urging Syria to implement reforms demanded by the people and further transition to a democratic order.

Economic cooperation and integration fits well with the goal of generating and sharing wealth. Turkey has increased its trade with neighbours from Iran and Syria to Russia and European countries over the last decade or so. Integration is a key component of the "zero problems with neighbours" policy. As a result, the business community has become a major stakeholder in foreign policy issues. Large delegations involving several hundred companies have become a fixture

on foreign visits by Turkey's president, premier or trade minister. Both Turkey and its partners benefit from such ties. Trade is a tool of sustainable and long-term political and diplomatic relations.

Cultural relations and people-to-people communication are helped by Turkey's long historical ties with communities in the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East and Central Asia. In recent years, cultural diplomacy has assumed a central place in international affairs. Turkey's attempt to turn cultural ties into a strategic asset has largely succeeded in creating a suitable environment for dialogue and cooperation.

It is also worth mentioning Turkey's soft power – a subject discussed by academics, policymakers, experts, journalists and even businessmen. The potential to project economic and cultural influence turns Turkey into a centre of attraction. The country's appeal is rooted in longstanding historical ties, profound cultural relations and a booming economy. But it also draws on Turkey's democratic credentials, and its transparency, accountability and political stability. From mediation efforts and diplomacy to FDI and soap operas, Turkey is realising new possibilities in the complex web of international relations.

Turkish foreign policy continues to be dynamic, proactive and future-oriented. The process of normalisation affecting every aspect of culture and domestic politics is also transforming Turkey's outlook externally. The story is still unfolding. But Turkey, which now occupies a stronger position both domestically and with regard to foreign policy, is set to be of strategic value to friends and allies both in the East and the West.

Atila Eralp and Zerrin Torun
Turkey-EU relations:
just another impasse?

7

Turkey's relations with the EU have been characterised by peaks and troughs. Deadlocks have been part of the picture, for instance in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup in Turkey or the 1997 Luxembourg Summit, when Turkish hopes for candidacy were not met. Currently, of the 35 chapters in accession negotiations, only 13 have been opened and 18 are frozen due to vetoes by Cyprus, France or the European Council as a whole, whereas the remaining three chapters (competition policy, social policy and employment, and public procurement) are technically difficult to implement. To an outside observer, the status of accession negotiations marked by this *de facto* deadlock may look like just another impasse. However, a number of characteristics make it different from previous blockages. Substantial efforts will therefore be required by both parties to overcome it.

To start with, as a number of surveys suggest, there is a considerable loss of hope and faith within Turkey and especially at the public level that the obstacles to Turkish membership of the bloc can be overcome this time. While the shift in perceptions does not translate into a major loss of support for EU membership in Turkey, the picture is quite different within the bloc itself. Although enthusiasm for the enlargement process has been generally muted on a public level, attitudes towards Turkey are different than other past and future candidates. Furthermore, Turkish accession has become an intrinsic element of domestic policy in EU member states – despite the official recognition of Turkish candidacy and the start of accession negotiations. This puts the credibility of the EU at risk in Turkish eyes. Of those members who view Turkey's membership negatively, Germany has officially adopted a policy of *pacta sunt servanda* despite remaining sceptical. France has refused to lift its veto of negotiation chapters.

All this draws attention to more structural problems besetting Turkey-EU relations, such as a predominance of essentialist views on the EU's identity

confirming the “Fortress Europe” trajectory. The answers to these questions may end up turning a *de facto* deadlock into a permanent one. Since the debate on Turkey increasingly revolves around questions concerning its “European-ness”, which, understood in socio-cultural – that is, religious – terms, amounts to an attempt to demarcate boundaries between Islam and the West, in this case Europe.

In such a context, attempts by those in favour of excluding Turkey from the EU to put forward alternative scenarios, such as the Union for the Mediterranean or the “privileged partnership”, have not only exacerbated Turkish mistrust of the EU, but also threatened democratisation reforms. The AKP’s first term in government was a period in which concerns about the Islamic leanings of its members were eased by the opening of accession negotiations and the ensuing reforms. However, recent debates within Europe have slowed this reform process geared towards EU standards, and resulted in a polarisation of Turkish society and a domestic policy approach with dwindling references to the EU. Any democratisation attempts, such as the “Kurdish opening” and the remarkable activism in foreign policy, now take place in the absence of the EU anchor.

Obviously, Turkish foreign policy initiatives in the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans, as well as in Africa, owe more to factors such as regional power vacuums, the improvement of Turkey’s economy and the loss of credibility of other actors than to religious affinities. The objective – to build interdependencies in the region to reduce the potential for conflict – resonates well with the EU approach to foreign policy and the accession criterion of good neighbourly relations. Therefore, increasing reliance on soft power by Turkey is a clear result of its EU-related transformation. Besides, Turkey’s increasing attractiveness among its neighbours is also a by-product of its EU candidacy. This may also explain why the government offers constant assurances to domestic and international audiences that EU membership remains a strategic goal.

However, the missing EU anchor at this juncture could doubtless lead to a divergence of Turkish and EU positions as the need and opportunities to coordinate foreign policy actions decrease. The major problem arising here is how international order can be preserved, as the future of the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans and Africa will increasingly depend on whether and how the EU, Turkey and the United States manage to synchronise their approach.

are now blocked gives credence to the argument that Turkey's growing foreign activism will turn out to be a classic example of the pursuit of national interests by a regional power in an emerging multi-polar world.

This is where calls for the establishment of informal strategic dialogue mechanisms between Turkey and the EU on foreign and security policy come into play. These mechanisms are all the more urgently required given that the prospect of Turkish membership is not even on the long-term agenda of EU members. Not all the proposals for such a strategic dialogue aim to establish some sort of privileged partnership, in substance if not in name, with Turkey. Most of them reflect the need to provide a modicum of bilateral communication despite the current deadlock in accession talks. Nonetheless, it is not clear how such informal schemes can succeed in securing a convergence of EU actions and those of a country that is anything but a candidate, when even members of the bloc do not adhere to the EU's foreign and security policy.

In this respect, facilitating permanent structured and enhanced cooperation between the EU and a candidate nation appears to be a more promising alternative. Such an arrangement sits somewhere between the September 2010 proposal for gradual Turkish membership made by the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament and calls for informal strategic dialogue aimed at generating new momentum in the accession process.¹⁰ It will offer much needed reassurance that when both the EU and Turkey are ready, membership will be on the agenda even in the distant future, and thus renew both parties' commitment to reform and integration while decreasing mutual distrust.

Such a process would not only make Turkey more amenable to the impact of the EU again in terms of democratic consolidation and continuation of other domestic reforms, but also catalyse increasing reliance on soft power in Turkish foreign policy. Furthermore, such a scheme would also be an acceptable stopgap measure to satisfy EU member states that officially oppose Turkish membership. However, it is highly likely that this scheme (which may be more reassuring for Turkey), or indeed any attempts to establish informal dialogue, will be vetoed by Cyprus.

¹⁰ Gradual membership includes a Turkish seat/participation in EU institutions without a voting right, which would only be attained via full membership.

In this regard it is crucial that the Cypriot issue, which currently haunts both the Turkish accession process and NATO-EU relations, is addressed. In Turkey, sensitivity over the Cyprus issue and criticism of the way the EU became a party to the problem will make it hard for any government to officially extend the EU Customs Union fully vis-à-vis Cyprus, in line with EU demands. Most people in Turkey believe that the Turkish Cypriots proved their willingness to resolve the conflict by voting in favour of the 2004 Annan Plan, while Greek Cypriots demonstrated their intransigence by voting against the UN deal. Considering criticism of the AKP's open support for the Annan Plan as a compromise on a national issue, it is understandable that the government does not go beyond supporting current rounds of talks between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, and declares that it would be wrong to force Turkey to choose between the EU and Cyprus.

For the Turks and Turkish Cypriots, the fact that the Greek Cypriots were rewarded with EU membership, whereas an EU pledge for direct trade with northern Cyprus never materialised, more than justifies Turkey's decision not to extend the Customs Union to Cyprus – even at the cost of numerous chapters being blocked by Nicosia. Popular mistrust of the EU in Turkey will make it hard for any cabinet to change this position. In fact, some segments of society may continue to oppose extending the Customs Union to Cyprus even if the EU Direct Trade Regulation with Turkish Cypriots becomes possible, arguing that the EU's double standards should be rejected. To these segments of society, the fact that the Customs Union demands that Turkey grant Cypriot ships and aircraft access to its ports and airports while placing Turkish transportation beyond the scope of the agreement is evidence of the EU's hypocrisy and consistent unfairness. Both are attributed to religion.

However, a Turkish proposal to open its ports to Cyprus in return for ending the isolation of Turkish Cypriots is still on the table. If Brussels clears the way for direct trade, Ankara will then be able to change its position at a relatively low electoral price. In other words, the EU's final decision on Direct Trade Regulation with northern Cyprus may be just as historic as the 1999 decision on Turkish candidacy. It holds the potential to undo the current deadlock in accession negotiations and to create a breathing space in bilateral relations in order for both the EU and Turkey to pursue stopgap measures.

Visa liberalisation would make an even greater difference, in addition to the symbolism of unblocking accession negotiations. It would underscore the EU's fairness claims and reduce levels of mistrust in Turkey. Visa liberalisation has

already been implemented for other candidate countries. Even limited visa-free travel arrangements for the Turkish business community, academics, students and members of governmental and non-governmental organisations would help to dispel the negative image of “the Turk” still in evidence in European societies. This would be the strongest bottom-up strategy the EU could adopt in order to stimulate dialogue on the societal level, a need acknowledged as far back as 1999 when Turkey was granted candidate status.

These two key moves would help to restore the EU as an anchor in Turkish politics. They would support domestic calls to consolidate democratisation across all segments of society and decrease polarisation. From a Turkish perspective, the EU anchor matters most when it comes to domestic transformation. However, at a time when significant changes are taking place in Turkey’s and the EU’s shared backyard, the EU’s assistance in the consolidation of Turkish democracy and Turkey’s place in the West will also help to defuse potential tensions and divergences in foreign and security policies.

If the EU is to enhance its credibility as well as its effectiveness as an actor supporting the principle of unity in diversity across cultures and nations, then these two measures are the most significant communicative strategies that it could adopt. Undoubtedly, by turning the current impasse into just another phase in Turkey-EU relations, the two moves will convey a significant message to Turkey and others keeping a close eye on the Turkish bid to join the EU as a test of civilisational relations between Islam and the West. The EU has been positively viewed because of its capacity and instruments to promote change inspired by Western-style democracy. Efforts to accept Turkey as one of its own will reaffirm the message coming out of the Middle East and North Africa that there is no inherent contradiction between democracy based on Western standards and ideals and Islam.

Suat Kımıkhođlu

Turkey's neighbourhood policy: reintegration into multiple regions¹¹

*"Turkey cannot be explained geographically or culturally by associating it with one single region."*¹²

Ahmet Davutođlu

Generations of Turks have become accustomed to the idea that Turkey was encircled by hostile countries. The Turkish state ethos reminded us that Turkey had always had a multitude of external and internal enemies. The elite thus inherited a strong sense of insecurity and viewed the former territories of the Ottoman Empire with suspicion. The late Ottoman and early republican elite physically fought to defend these confines, which extended from North Africa to the Balkans and from the Caucasus to the Middle East. But these territories were all bitterly lost. For decades, the Turkish security establishment was thus groomed to view Turkey's neighbours as former Ottoman subjects who would ultimately betray the empire and attack it when it was at its weakest.

The traditional Turkish view is that its neighbours are not only suspect due to acts of "betrayal" and "backstabbing", but also guilty of carrying out this betrayal with the help and encouragement of "European imperialist powers". For example, the Turkish War of Independence was fought against the French, the British, the Greeks and, to some extent, the Italians. The Turkish historical narrative makes no bones about the trauma this state of affairs inflicted on the nation. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's famous dictum "Peace at home, peace in the world" emerged from this painful historical experience.

¹¹ The views expressed here are personal and should not be construed as official Turkish government policy.

¹² "Turkey's New Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No.1, 2008, p. 78.

Following the establishment of the Turkish republic, the founder of this new country called on Turks to be content with the national borders secured by the War of Independence and urged them to take a realistic view of the situation. Over time, Turkish decision makers interpreted this dictum in a rather extreme way and have traditionally shied away from dealing with Turkey's neighbours. They almost completely turned their backs on former Ottoman territories in a determined effort to consolidate what they had salvaged from the large empire. With some minor exceptions, this state of affairs held sway until the 1990s.

However, the disintegration of the Soviet Union radically changed Turkey's external environment. Gone were the years of stability and predictability that characterised the Cold War era. The first Gulf War swiftly revealed just how reluctant Turkey was to become embroiled in complex regional issues. The Ecevit cabinet introduced the concept of "region-based foreign policy" in 1999, but the idea was short-lived and lacked a comprehensive intellectual framework. However, the rise of the AKP and the presence of a new elite in government has radically transformed Turkey's perceptions of its neighbourhood space. Finding its intellectual inspiration in the version of the concept of strategic depth expounded by Ahmet Davutoğlu, the first foreign policy advisor to the prime minister and then Ankara's first diplomat, the new foreign policy cast Turkey's neighbourhood space in a totally new light. Gone were the enemies who were out to destabilise the country by fomenting disunity within. Instead, the new approach rebranded neighbours as brothers, relatives, people with whom we share a common history, culture and often religion.

One of the main driving forces of Turkey's new foreign policy is a distinct reconnection with the nation's history, culture and civilisation. I am referring here to a new consciousness that permeates all segments of Turkish society. What motivates this consciousness on the elite level is a recognition of Turkey's unique strategic depth. Instead of seeing Turkey as geographically on the edge of Europe or in the southeast corner of the NATO region, the new foreign policy resituates Turkey's geostrategic position at the centre of Afro-Eurasian landmasses. More specifically, it puts Turkey at the centre of five intersecting regions, namely the Balkans, the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey's neighbourhood policy thus constitutes a "mental repositioning" of the country within the region. The approach represents a reappraisal of Turkish affiliation and strategic identity, necessitated by the calculation that Turkish security can only be facilitated if the region is stable, predictable and safe. As Davutoğlu noted in June 2010:

If we wish to sleep in peace in Anatolia, we need to make sure that people in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Sarajevo, sleep in peace. In Palestine, Iraq, in the Middle East, the Caucasus, they need to be in peace. Our foreign policy requires us to be at peace with our neighbours.

The policy seeks to reintegrate Turkey into its immediate neighbourhood. It aims to establish new interdependencies that would minimise the potential for conflict between Turkey and its neighbours. Operationally, Turkey's neighbourhood policy has been facilitated through the following measures:

1. Deepening political dialogue with our neighbours
2. Increasing our trade and energy relations with our neighbours
3. Encouraging direct people-to-people contact with our neighbours

Consequently, there has been an exponential increase in high-level political contacts with neighbouring nations. Trade and energy links have multiplied in an unprecedented manner. As a result, Turkey has effectively begun to diversify its external trade portfolio. Turkey's soft power has become an important component of Turkey's foreign and security policy. Turkish music, TV shows, movies and football teams enjoy unprecedented levels of popularity in neighbouring nations. Turkey's liberal visa regime has also fostered trade relations and enhanced processes of cultural and ideological exchange.

Although there is no conceptual difference between any of the geographical regions surrounding Turkey, Ankara's approach to the Middle East has captured particular international attention. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the attentions of Turkish decision makers have been urgently drawn to this region owing to the US occupation of Iraq and subsequent events in the Middle East. Secondly, the AKP's network in the area is very extensive, and it was only natural that the new policy drive would work well there. The conservative nature of the AKP government, its principled position vis-à-vis the Palestinian question, as well as its mediation role in a number of regional conflicts, have made Turkey attractive across the Middle East. However, Turkey's greatest success has been its reputation as a role model and/or an inspiration for the progressive elites of the region. The AKP, and Turkey as a whole, have become a reference point and a successful model that bridges Islam and universal values such as women's, minority and human rights within a working democracy. Furthermore, while the US and the EU have suffered significant slowdowns due to the global economic crisis, Turkey has enjoyed steady economic growth throughout the last decade, tripling its GDP in seven years.

Turkey views itself as an emerging regional hegemon. The nation was a member of the UN Security Council for the 2009-2010 term and a founding member of the G-20; Ankara has twice chaired the Organisation of the Islamic Conference; and continues to negotiate with the EU, albeit with mixed success – all of which underlines Turkey's self-perception as a burgeoning power with a secure berth in the system of global governance. A greater acceptance of religion and a desire for a more open notion of secularism have led to a greater openness with respect to Islamic countries. Most Turks are very sensitive to the Palestinian cause, follow events in the Middle East closely and are generally more sensitised to neighbourhood issues. Turkish people have been keeping a close eye on the recent revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

Turkey's neighbourhood policy is fully in line with the EU's neighbourhood policy (ENP). Turkey is in effect implementing policies that share similar objectives to those of the ENP. From Ankara's perspective, Turkey's neighbourhood policy is viewed not as an alternative to aspirations to join the EU but as burden-sharing. However, the EU is failing to adequately recognise and appreciate Turkey's burden-sharing efforts. Worse still, some in Europe seem to think that Turkey is taking over a contested neighbourhood. The increasingly fragile state of the negotiation process is only adding to simmering frustration with the EU. Rising racism and Islamophobia in Europe is dampening the enthusiasm of ordinary Turks for the EU project.

Turkey's increasing self-confidence is often met by European arrogance and an inability to treat Turkey as a strategic partner rather than an ordinary applicant country. Turkey's relationship with the US is also going through a comprehensive redefinition. While Turkey appreciates its strategic partnership with Washington, the relationship has suffered immensely since the Iraq invasion. This resulted in a severe security vacuum that allowed the PKK to regroup and unleash violence against Turkey. US-Turkish relations looked more favourable following the election of President Obama, but have since hit another rocky patch with a disagreement over how to deal with Iran and Turkish-Israeli tensions.

Although the Turkish-American partnership has become much more diverse and comprehensive, ordinary Turks see it primarily through three issues: firstly, the PKK and its existence in northern Iraq; secondly, the unconditional US support for Israel in the Middle East; and thirdly, how the Armenian issue is viewed in the US Congress. Again, Turkish decision makers see no contradiction between their neighbourhood policy and their relationship with the US. On

the contrary, Turkey feels it is contributing positively through burden-sharing and advocating moderation in its neighbourhood space. Indeed, Turkey does promote democracy, human rights and gender equality in its dealings with its Middle Eastern neighbours. Turkey's early support for pro-democracy forces in Tunisia and Egypt attracted a great deal of attention throughout the region.

The rise of the AKP has marked what foreign minister Davutoğlu described as "Turkey's fourth restoration period". References to earlier restoration periods in the history of the Ottoman Empire are an indication that Turkey's new foreign policy elite clearly sees continuity with the Ottoman era. Yet Ankara is very sensitive to charges of neo-Ottomanism. Turkey does not want to be boxed into a neo-Ottoman framework that could generate unnecessary resistance and doubts over its objectives. While former Turkish restoration periods involved significant efforts to adjust to changing regional and global conditions, Turkey's current foreign policy represents both an adjustment to the post-Cold War foreign and security policy environment and the nation's own attempts to shape this era.

Turkey is fully cognizant of the tectonic shifts occurring in the regional and global order. It is trying to respond to these changes with an approach that puts Ankara at the centre of its outlook. In addition, Turkey's foreign policy choices cannot be appreciated in a vacuum, and must be considered in light of regional upheaval, the US perception of regional and global affairs, especially post-Iraq, and the prevailing scepticism towards Turkey within the EU. Seen from this vantage point, Turkey faces a global order in transition. It sees both challenges and opportunities in a rapidly transforming world in which the gravity of global affairs, economic dynamism and cultural revival is increasingly shifting away from Europe and towards the East. Turkey's neighbourhood policy is a clear response to these momentous changes.

Accusations that Turkey has turned its back on the West are both premature and invalid. The realities of Turkey's geographical space fundamentally require us to engage with East and West as well as with North and South. This is neither an arbitrary choice nor a matter of luxury – it is a necessity. The symbols of the Byzantine Empire and the Great Seljuq Empire, which occupied roughly the same geographical area as Turkey does today, were double-headed eagles looking both east and west. It is therefore hardly surprising that Turkey is also seeking to engage both ends of its geographical extensions and feels that its security is best consolidated by minimising risks through engagement. Turkey does not seek to revive the Ottoman Empire. Instead, it is pursuing an historical

reintegration into its neighbourhood space, thereby correcting an anomaly of the Cold War era. Such a reintegration can only benefit our traditional allies and our neighbours.

From a historical, cultural and civilisational perspective, a new Turkey is in the making. This new Turkey is not content with a fragile, unfair and unequal relationship with Europe. It seeks a proper, respected and dignified position in an extremely complicated geographical setting. Our neighbourhood policy constitutes an important step towards attaining that new regional position.

The AKP's foreign policy in context

There is a somewhat irritating tendency in Turkey these days to view the AKP's rise to power as the starting point in any analysis of the nation's foreign policy. Admittedly, the period since 2002 has seen a more active, imaginative and, at times, effective Turkish diplomacy. In Ahmet Davutoğlu, the AKP has had a very articulate theoretician who conceptualised Turkish foreign policy in creative ways using concepts such as “zero problems with neighbours”, “strategic depth”, and “Turkey as a centre country” that have gained currency both domestically and abroad. In the last eight years, Turkish foreign policymakers have also pursued a more assertive, proactive and visible role in neighbouring regions. The mere fact that Turkey no longer has visa requirements with several neighbours in the Middle East and the Balkans, not to mention Russia, is a considerable accomplishment.

Yet for all the high-profile foreign policy activism, the trends that have been a feature of this period did not materialise out of thin air: Turkey displayed a healthy level of interest in its neighbours in the last decade of the 20th century; relations with three of its regional adversaries – Greece, Syria and Iran – began to improve in the late 1990s; and it was the dysfunctional coalition government of Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit that undertook the first serious and difficult package of reforms for EU accession in 2002. (It should also be remembered that this coalition, which included the ultranationalist MHP, abolished the death penalty – a measure that effectively saved the life of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and was opposed by AKP deputies in parliament.) This suggests that there are strong elements of continuity in Turkish foreign policy and that certain trends were already emerging at the end of the Cold War.

The developments in Turkish foreign policy in the past decade are the result of changes in both regional and international structures and the dynamics of a rapidly modernising Turkish society as much as the AKP. Even today, the

choices available to and the impact of AKP foreign policy are still circumscribed by structural conditions. This is why its defining feature is less a dramatic break from the past than a continuation of a search for the appropriate course in the post-Cold War world. It is therefore important to critically evaluate the record of this foreign policy without doing injustice to the accomplishments of the AKP period.

The great convulsions engulfing the Middle East make this evaluation all the more urgent. Many commentators have prematurely declared Turkey's time in the limelight over. But this verdict ignores or underestimates the structural factors that have enabled Turkey to play an important role in the region. Apparent failure or timidity in the face of a torrent of revolutionary changes in the Arab world should be seen as a problem of management rather than a sign that Turkey does not have the aptitude, capacity or potential to impact developments in its vicinity. As Issandr El Amrani put it: "The real achievement of Turkey's foreign policy is not so much its success in achieving its goals, but its independence: it acts like a sovereign state, not a client state. In the face of a tough and unpredictable regional situation that directly affects its interests, it may have faltered, but it has retained its autonomy."¹³

As well as in the Middle East, the AKP government also needs to evaluate its performance elsewhere. Despite many accomplishments, its policies in the Caucasus have not yielded either the declared or the desired results. On the contrary, nearly 20 years of investment in Georgia was wiped out by the Russian invasion. Efforts to normalise relations with Armenia faltered due to Prime Minister Erdoğan's reluctance to alienate Azerbaijan, while Baku still seethes with resentment that the attempt at rapprochement took place at all. Relations with Russia are unequal in both the economic and political-strategic sense, even though the two countries are currently enjoying the closest and most multifaceted ties in their long history. Constructive engagement in the Balkans has also led to progress in relations with Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia.

Meanwhile the EU accession process has long been in a deep coma, with neither side making much of an effort to revive it. Immersed in its economic problems and plagued by a resurgent nationalist/racist wave, progress on Turkey is blocked by two of its most important members, France and Germany. But the distance between Brussels and Ankara has also been widened by the anti-

¹³ Issandr El Amrani, "Why Turkey is still worthy of emulation", *The Arabist*, 6 May 2011, available at <http://www.arabist.net/blog/2011/5/6/why-turkey-is-still-worthy-of-emulation.html>.

European tenor of the Turkish prime minister's discourse, increasing regression from democratic practices, and doubts about the rule of law and violations of press freedom. In its quest to fully dominate Turkey's political landscape, the AKP is perilously eroding the main tenets of a liberal democratic order and disturbing the balance between Turkey's attributes as a secular, capitalist and democratic country with a Muslim population that is a NATO member and an EU applicant. When these attributes are out of balance, Turkey's regional ambitions suffer. In the wake of the Arab revolts, in which Turkey has been invoked as a model, its democratic credentials need to be stellar.

Fine-tuning Turkish foreign policy

Over the past year, there have been moments of apparent rupture between Turkey and its Western allies. Ankara's reaction to the Israeli raid on the Mavi Marmara, the Gaza aid flotilla flagship, which killed eight Turkish citizens, strained relations not just with Israel but also with the United States and other allies. Turkey's "no" vote at the UN Security Council on new sanctions against Iran also prompted a strong and angry reaction from Washington. Yet Turkey's status in the international system, its societal and political characteristics, and the quirks of its geography will continue to enable Ankara to play an important role in the international arena – especially in the Middle East and North Africa after the revolutionary upheavals there. Alongside regional actors, NATO allies and the EU, Turkey can play a pivotal part in the restructuring of the regional order and contribute to the establishment and consolidation of a stable environment. In the words of Davutoğlu, it can be an "order setter".

In order to play this kind of influential role, however, Ankara will have to fine-tune its foreign policy by becoming more realistic and adjusting its style. For instance, Ankara's desire for good economic ties and to open new markets, as well as the imperative to avoid another war in the region, have led it to engage with Tehran while also balancing Iran in Iraq, Lebanon and Gaza. However, this engagement has led to a global perception that Turkey is opening up to Iran at the expense of its allies. In addition, the ubiquitous angry anti-Israel rhetoric has reignited the absurd debate about whether or not Turkish foreign policy has been hijacked by Islamism. The Turkish prime minister also made the absurd claim that the Sudanese could not have committed genocide because Islam proscribes such an act. Avoiding rhetoric of this kind, coupled with improved lines of communication with allies, will help shape the perception of the AKP's foreign policy by other powers.

Opening up to the Middle East

The end of the Cold War changed Turkey's geostrategic status and, in particular, its role in the Middle East. The dissolution of the Soviet Union heralded a new era in which Turkey's interests would not necessarily and automatically coincide with those of its Western allies. The early 1990s saw a problematic period concerning relations with the US as Ankara and Washington sought to define their common interests. But as the centre of strategic and economic gravity has shifted from Europe to Asia, Turkey has found itself in a privileged position. As a secular, democratic and predominantly Muslim NATO ally that is integrated into the world economy and close to the energy reserves of the Caspian and the Gulf, Turkey can claim an important place in the emergent map of the world.

US efforts to reshape the global order on its own terms in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, beginning with the Middle East, also raised Turkey's profile. Following the Iraq war, the hitherto politically subservient or excluded Shi'a and Kurdish populations gained access to – and in fact assumed control of – levers of power. The Arab state system's legitimacy crisis deepened, the regional order lost its bearings – edging to a near collapse – and Iran consolidated its strength. In this context, critical space emerged for Turkey to counterbalance Iran in strategic and sectarian terms. Arguably, this potential for counterbalancing explains the favourable approach of some Gulf countries towards Turkey's rising profile.

Turkey's internal dynamics also favoured engagement with all surrounding regions but especially with the Middle East. Here, foreign policy continuity can be traced back to Turgut Özal, who sought to make Turkey more active in the region after the Gulf War and envisioned deepening economic ties as the driving force of Turkey's foreign policy approach towards its neighbours. However, the project was not fully realised due to objections from Turkey's security establishment and because the Turkish economy was not yet ready to carry such a burden. Feeling increasingly isolated and besieged in the mid-1990s, Turkey took the bold step of aligning itself strategically with Israel in 1996. This was partly why Syria had to expel from Damascus Abdullah Öcalan, the head of the terrorist PKK and Turkey's public enemy number one, in October 1998. After 1999, Ankara improved its relations with both Damascus and Tehran.

Domestically, Turkey's changing demography, the cultural and ideological profile of the rising elite, and their economic interests also favoured an opening-up to the Middle East. Following the 2001 crisis, the economy was consolidated and stable growth restored, allowing Turkey to move into the chaotic environment

resulting from the Iraq war. Turkish trade with the region nearly doubled, the number of tourists coming to Turkey from Arab countries increased, and the lifting of visas as well as the popularity of Turkish television series intensified society-to-society relations.

Finally, by breaking the obduracy of the military concerning the political recognition of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Turkey is now also re-establishing the economic relations between northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey that existed in the era of the Ottoman Empire. Turkey's economic and cultural presence in the KRG, and the increasing cooperation with the KRG against the PKK, which is based in the Kandil mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan, is remoulding relations in ways that were unthinkable only five years ago.

Turkey's democratic system, the relative openness of its society and its strong economic performance have helped make it an attractive example for the region. While Arab leaders keep quiet about Israeli attacks on Gaza, Erdoğan has become popular on the Arab street by championing Palestinian rights. However, discussion of Turkish "soft power" in the region hid the paradox that Turkey's entire strategy was predicated on, and its popularity was a function of, the existing status quo in the Arab world. Turkey could balance its dual goals of working with regimes and insinuating Turkey into all regional problems, including inter-Arab politics, while endearing the country to Arab populations and perhaps inspiring them, only as long as the Arab world remained stagnant.

The future has arrived

The Arab revolts changed all that. Like the rest of the world, the Turkish government was taken by surprise and had to improvise its response. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu spoke of the normalisation of Middle Eastern history and Prime Minister Erdoğan was the first leader to call on Egypt's Hosni Mubarak to go. But other cases were not as simple to navigate. Libya proved quite a challenge for the Turkish government, which found itself caught between its economic interests and unilateralist instincts for regional diplomacy on the one hand and its NATO ties on the other. Erdoğan initially opposed NATO action and accused his country's allies of being after Libya's oil, but such strident rhetoric gradually gave way to a more conciliatory tone. Turkey eventually supported UN Security Council Resolution 1973 but opposed any deployment of ground troops. In short, when the chips were down, Turkey – unlike Germany – again joined ranks with its allies.

The case of Syria is also complicated. Turkey had invested heavily in the Ba'ath regime over the course of the past decade and provided cover for the besieged authorities in Damascus after the Iraq war and the assassination of Rafik Hariri. As a result, Ankara cannot openly call for regime change or ask Bashar al-Assad to go. On the other hand, by failing to do so, it risks undermining its claims to be a champion of democratic rights and an "order setter". The situation has revealed the paradox that whereas Turkey has presented itself as an agent of change in the region, its success, visibility and effectiveness depended substantially on the existing status quo.

For better or worse, this status quo is now unravelling. There is now the promise of an Arab world that will negate violence and opt for politics. It was therefore ironic and symbolic that Osama bin Laden was killed during this Arab Spring. However, his death and the passing of the jihadist moment also mean that one of the conditions that elevated Turkey's profile is also disappearing. This changing situation necessitates a reassessment and a recalibration.

Turkey still has a role to play as this story unfolds. But its real strengths lie in its functioning economy, secular democratic system and ability to mediate between its Western allies and a region that is at long last joining the 21st-century mainstream. It is therefore important for Turkey to improve its relations with a confused and paralysed EU. Given the security dynamics in the Mediterranean basin as a whole, the lack of dialogue between Turkey and Brussels (or Berlin, Paris and London for that matter) is unconscionable for all parties.

AFTERWORD

Ivan Krastev

Tentative conclusions of a fascinated ignorant

The Second Republic is dead – but the Third Republic has not yet been born. There are lots of fears, confusions and uncertainties, so you can't expect that what Turkey thinks today will be what it thinks in a month's time. But there are several things that are strikingly obvious.

Above all, Turkey is self-confident and optimistic, which makes it non-Western at a moment when the West is pessimistic. This optimism can to a large extent be explained by Turkey's economic growth and demographic profile. The recent successes of Turkish foreign policy are also crucial for Turkey's self-confidence. As a result of the current state of excitement and self-glorification, Turkey is generally unaware of the structural vulnerability of the current situation; tends to underestimate others and particularly the EU; and risks grandstanding and hyper-activism.

At the same time, however, Turkey is vulnerable in three ways. First, it is caught between Europe's high-tech economies and Asia's low-wage economies. For the moment, only a massive flow of foreign investment can guarantee the continuity of growth. But since 2007 the AKP government has lost some of its reformist zeal. Stalled reforms could cause an economic crash that would have a profound effect on how Turks see the world and their role in it. Second, although Turkey's foreign policy since 2007 has been critical for shaping the new identity and self-confidence of the regime, the stakes have now increased. Serious analysts of Turkey's foreign policy should keep in mind that economic growth and foreign policy successes are the two major pillars for the popularity of the government. Third, the growing polarisation of society could lead either to political deadlock or to authoritarianism.

Turkey is deeply polarised between “anxious moderns” and Erdoğan's majority. The real political risk for Turkey's democracy today is not Islamisation but “Putinisation”. There is no question that the AKP was the major force in

democratising Turkey's Second Republic, but in the absence of social, political and institutional constraints, the AKP regime could easily mutate into an illiberal, majoritarian democracy. At the moment, we are seeing the AKP's attempt to establish control over the judiciary and the media.

The EU cannot become a factor in guaranteeing the deepening of democracy in the coming Third Republic. One of the many reasons for this is that, after the army lost its power to overturn legitimate governments, the EU lost its political importance for the AKP. Meanwhile, the secularist opposition is still bitter about the EU and does not know how to use it in its attempts to prevent the AKP from getting total control. The EU's double game on Turkish accession has produced a sense of mistrust in Turkish society towards the EU.

For the moment, the EU's moment is over. While the opinion polls still register considerable levels of support for Turkish accession, support for the EU is mediated by party affiliations. If the AKP decided to change its position on the EU, the current figures would change dramatically. The logic of the electoral cycle suggests that Erdoğan will not move towards EU integration until 2015. A tougher line towards the EU is the only way for him to win some of the MHP vote, thus consolidating his regime. For the moment, the EU is not the major strategic objective of the government's policy, but rather its insurance policy. The status quo therefore looks stable. As Gerald Knaus has pointed out, the relationship looks like an unhappy Catholic marriage: no future but also no divorce, because the costs are too high. At the moment, the EU is perceived in Turkey as a declining and retirement-minded power.

However, the EU may get a second chance. The real policy question is whether it will be able to act if and when that chance comes. In particular, there may be a new integration window if Turkey faces a crisis and the EU regains self-confidence. Surveys show a strong positive correlation between support for the EU and a deterioration of the economic situation in Turkey. When the Turkish economy is growing, Turks tend to overlook the EU. However, in troubled times, the EU looms large. For now, the official line is that moving away from the EU has helped Turkey to recover quickly from the global economic downturn. The Turkish imagination is fascinated by trends rather than volumes, and politicians tend to underestimate their dependence on Europe and its market. However, a crisis would change things. The EU should be ready to act.

78 Turkish foreign policy has broad support and is perceived as successful. But although Turkey could end up as the biggest winner of the changes in the Middle

East, it is paradoxically already the biggest loser. The striking outcome of the Arab revolutions is that Turkey's "zero problems" foreign policy cannot be sustained in the new context. Turkey's room for manoeuvre has narrowed. At the same time, however, Turkey has real advantages: a good knowledge of the region; the popularity of its mass culture; active trade relations; and familiarity with all players. Turkey will try to mediate transitions (particularly in Egypt) while keeping a low public profile. It will try to remain a non-Western power and reject major common initiatives with the West. In short, the prospects are for a more – not less – independent foreign policy.

List of acronyms

AKP	<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> , Justice and Development Party
BDP	<i>Bariş ve Demokrasi Partisi</i> , Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party
CHP	<i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i> , Republican People's Party
DTP	<i>Demokratik Toplum Partisi</i> , Kurdish Democratic Society Party
MHP	<i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i> , Nationalist Movement Party
JITEM	<i>Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele</i> , Intelligence and Counterterrorism Gendarmerie Force, a controversial department of the Turkish gendarmerie blamed for many extrajudicial killings in Kurdish areas at the peak of the conflict in the 1990s
PKK	<i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan</i> , Kurdistan Workers' Party
TÜSİAD	<i>Türk Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği</i> , Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association

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