

## **Anchoring Turkey to the EU: Domestic- and Foreign-Policy Challenges**

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### **RÉSUMÉ**

Depuis décembre 1999 la Turquie s'est embarquée formellement dans une voie d'adhésion à l'Europe. Au delà de la rhétorique, cependant, il n'existe pas encore un consensus que ce soit chez les Turcs ou dans l'UE quant à la possibilité d'une Turquie pleinement européenne et sur la nécessaire transformation du pays que cela impliquerait. Pendant que l'orientation européenne de la Turquie va probablement persister, l'étendue de sa profondeur et les niveaux d'intégration qui s'ensuivront dans l'UE demeurent incertains. Des développements en Turquie, en Europe et dans le système international plus élargi vont déterminer l'évolution des relations de l'UE avec la Turquie. En particulier l'étendue et la vitesse du processus des réformes en Turquie et la manière avec laquelle ce pays va se comporter envers les défis de la politique étrangère à l'égard de ses voisins va affecter de façon dramatique ses relations avec l'UE dans les mois et les années à venir.

### **ABSTRACT**

Since December 1999, Turkey has formally embarked on an EU accession path. Beyond the rhetoric, however, consensus has not yet been achieved in either Turkey or the European Union on the desirability of a fully European Turkey and on the necessary transformation of the country that this would entail. While Turkey's European orientation is likely to persist, the extent of its depth and the ensuing levels of integration in the EU remain uncertain. Developments in Turkey, Europe and the wider international system will determine the evolution of EU-Turkey relations. In particular, the extent and speed of Turkey's reform process and the manner in which Turkey will deal with the foreign policy challenges in its neighborhood will critically affect EU-Turkey relations in the months and years ahead.

### **Introduction**

Since the foundation of the Kemalist Republic, Turkey sought to associate itself with the West; i.e., with both Europe and America. Although with the end of the Cold War, Turkey's ties with the Caucasus and Central Asia were strengthened, the dominant position in Ankara never advocated a

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turnaround in Turkey's orientation. On the contrary, Turkey presented its strategic importance to the West precisely in view of its bridging role to the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Turkey's European orientation remained a cornerstone of its foreign policy. Since 1987, this had taken the form of aspiring to become a full member of the EC/EU. As of December 1999, its prospects of full membership, while remaining in an uncertain and distant future, were accepted by the European Council. Yet, scratching beneath the surface, there is no consensus either in Turkey or in the Union about the desirability of a fully European Turkey and the necessary transformation of the country that this would entail. As such, even though Turkey's European orientation is likely to persist, the extent of its depth and the ensuing levels of integration in the EU remain uncertain. Developments in Turkey, in Europe and in the wider international system will determine the evolution of EU-Turkey relations.

### **Beneath the Surface of Turkey-EU relations**

As expressed by several Turkish analysts: "there are many Ankaras." The multi-faceted nature of the Turkish establishment became particularly evident in the aftermath of the December 1999 Helsinki European Council. Turkey's candidacy meant that it was no longer sufficient to pay lip service to the goal of membership. If Ankara was serious in its aspirations to join the Union, it had to demonstrate that it was equally committed to the Copenhagen criteria. As European demands for reform rose, the concerns and resistance against change in Ankara emerged more clearly.

Effective opposition to EU membership or rather opposition to the reform needed to attain it existed within most groups of the Turkish political system. Those resisting change included circles in the nationalist right and in the nationalist left, in both the civilian and the military establishments. Some right wing nationalists preferred to establish closer links to Turkic Eurasia than to see Turkey's full integration with Western Europe. Traditional Kemalists objected to the principles and applications of multiculturalism and multi-level governance within the EU. Others opposed the rising interference of Brussels in Turkish domestic political life and were more inclined to pursue Turkey's Western orientation through closer ties with the US.

Indeed, often spurred by the US, conservative elements within the Turkish establishment argued that Turkey should be admitted to the Union on laxer conditions given its strategic importance. For example, the MHP (National Movement Party) leader, Devlet Bahçeli, argued that “we need to have a just and honorable relationship with the EU. We strongly oppose the notion that we should fulfill every demand of the EU to become a member or we have to enter the EU at any cost.”<sup>1</sup> Turkish national pride was used as a major weapon, as Turkish Euro-sceptics accused Europhiles of displaying a “lack of confidence in the nation, the Republic, the institutions, ... everything called Turkish.”<sup>2</sup> Turkey’s alternatives to Europe were also cited. On March 6, 2002, General Tuncer Kiliç, MGK (National Security Council) Secretary General, stated that given EU demands, Turkey should start looking for alternative allies such as Russia and Iran.

The AKP (Justice and Development Party) landslide victory in the November elections tilted the balance within the party political system in favor of the pro-European reformists. The AKP refuses to define itself as a religious party; instead, it calls for greater religious freedoms. In order to carry a consistent political message, it advocates personal freedoms in other spheres as well, including in the cultural and linguistic domains. Its support for EU membership is not only viewed as an end to be attained through painful reforms. In the AKP’s rhetoric, the EU anchor is portrayed also a means to attain the objectives of reform, which are as important as membership itself.<sup>3</sup> But while the balance within the party political spectrum tilted in favour of the reformists (the only opposition party, Deniz Baykal’s CHP [Republican People’s Party] also declares itself in strong support of reforms and EU membership), this is not necessarily the case yet within the wider establishment, which includes, the civilian administration, the Presidency, academia, the media, the intelligence community and the influential military.

Pro-European reformers in Turkey are weakened internally by the lack of credibility of EU policies towards Turkey. EU actors, particularly those who are conservative/Christian ‘Democratic leaning’, frequently indicated their reluctance to accept Turkey as a full member irrespective of its compliance with the Copenhagen criteria. Religion, geography, demography, economic development as well as the legitimate concerns over democracy and human rights were cited as the impeding factors to Turkey’s EU membership. One

of the most recent expressions of European exclusionism were the comments by Convention President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in the run-up to the 2002 Copenhagen European Council, when he stated that Turkey had a "different culture, a different approach, a different way of life...its capital is not in Europe, 95% of its population lives outside Europe, it is not a European country...in my opinion it would be the end of the EU."<sup>4</sup>

In several instances in the recent history of EU-Turkey relations, "Turkey-skeptics" in Europe and "Euro-skeptics" in Turkey reinforced each other in a vicious circle of antagonism and lack of reform in Turkey together with European distancing from Turkey. On the one hand, the member states were the more skeptical regarding Turkey's future in Europe, thus EU policies towards Turkey were less forthcoming. This gave greater credibility to the Turkish nationalists/conservatives, who claimed that Turkey would never be admitted to the Union and that the country should be cautious in pursuing destabilizing reforms. In other words, the more founded Turkey's mistrust of Europe was and the slower its own process of transformation. On the other hand, as conservatives in Ankara gained the upper hand in domestic and foreign policymaking, EU actors became less forthcoming towards Turkey.

On other occasions the vicious circle was broken, opening the way to virtuous interactions. When EU member states seemed more willing in providing an external anchor to Turkey; Turkish progressive forces all the stronger. In turn, the more Turkey advanced along the path of reform, and the more EU member states were inclined to advance Turkey's accession process. As noted above, not all European concerns stem from the flaws in Turkey's political system. Nevertheless, an increasingly robust process of Turkish transformation is the most powerful weapon to weaken the Turkey-skeptic voices in Western Europe. Consensus within the Union on the desirability of a new member state, particularly an important yet problematic applicant like Turkey, does not emerge overnight. It is a gradual process established and consolidated over time. Hence, the more credible is Turkey's reform movement and the more irreversible will Turkey's long and tortuous accession process become.

## **Virtuous Circles in the Process of Domestic Reform and Remaining Challenges**

At the December 2002 European Council in Copenhagen, the fifteen member states converged on a variation of a Franco-German proposal. They agreed that if in December 2004 the European Council deems Turkey in compliance with the 1993 Copenhagen criteria, the Turkish government would be invited to begin accession negotiations “without delay.” The decision was below Turkish expectations. Turkey had lobbied intensely to begin accession negotiations before the next enlargement in May 2004. The Council feared that the accession of ten new members could introduce new obstacles in Turkey’s path. Yet the EU-Fifteen’s concern that a commitment on Turkey upon the eve of enlargement could create tensions with the future member states was precisely why consensus was forged around a December 2004 date. This is not to say that the new members would necessarily object to Turkey’s accession. Less still that the December 2004 date was a sinister European ploy to defer indefinitely Turkey’s membership by relying on the resistance of the future members, as was speculated by several Turkish policymakers and opinion shapers.<sup>5</sup> The European Council’s reasoning was rather that committing EU-25 to a decision taken shortly before by EU-15 would have sent the wrong signals to the new members on the eve of enlargement.

While below Turkish expectations, the Copenhagen decision should be considered a success following the promising path set by the 1999 Helsinki European Council and deviating from the 1997 Luxembourg Council. Indeed the Copenhagen decision was part of a virtuous circle in EU-Turkey relations. It was preceded and followed by important domestic reforms in Turkey.

The December 2002 decision was heavily influenced by the August 3<sup>rd</sup> constitutional reform package in Turkey. On August 3, 2002 the Turkish parliament, despite acute domestic political turmoil, succeeded in passing the third EU harmonization package, which abolished the death penalty in Turkey and lifted the ban on broadcasting and education in languages other than Turkish (most notably Kurdish). The reforms added credibility to Turkey’s requests for a date to launch accession negotiations in the run-up to the Copenhagen Council. The Copenhagen decision was then followed by the fourth and the fifth reform packages of the new AKP government in

January 2003. The reforms amended the political parties law, increased penalties for torture crimes, expanded the freedom of the press and the freedom of association, abolished restrictions on the acquisition of property by non-Muslim foundations and allowed for retrials of cases contrary to European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) judgments.

In light of the Copenhagen decision and Turkish domestic reforms, the Union updated Turkey's Accession Partnership. Through it, the EU pointed out the remaining reforms necessary for full compliance with the Copenhagen criteria. The Commission's proposal was adopted by the Council in March 2003.<sup>6</sup> The document, while praising Turkey's legislative amendments, highlighted the challenges ahead. These included the resolution of the Cyprus conflict and Turkey's border disputes (mainly in the Aegean), the ratification of the remaining international and European human rights conventions, the reform of the National Security Council, the need to strengthen the independence of the judiciary and the need to reduce regional disparities. Many recommendations concentrated on the need for effective implementation of the reforms. Effective application was called for in the fight against torture, the respect of detainee rights, the freedom of association and of all forms of non-violent expression, the respect of religious rights and the access to education and broadcasting in languages other than Turkish.

In the spring and summer of 2003 the government persisted in the legal harmonization process. In July 2003, parliament succeeded in passing the wide-ranging 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> reform packages described in the box below. Amongst the most important changes were the extension of freedoms of speech and association, the increased civilianization of the MGK and the extension of cultural, religious and linguistic rights (and most notably the use of the Kurdish language in the media and education). Finally, the AKP government passed a law granting partial amnesty to PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) militants.

Few in Brussels would dispute the fact that on paper Turkey has come a long way, indeed most of the way towards the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria. The key question highlighted in Turkey's revised Accession Partnership was the manner in which the seven harmonization packages would be translated into practice. In some cases, legislative reforms suffice. Matters such as who convenes MGK meetings, how many members of the

Council are military persons, how often the Council convenes or who appoints the Secretary General are relatively clearcut changes that simply necessitated legislative reforms. The legal reforms will in themselves impact policies and practices. Yet for the effective application of most other reforms, a change in legislation is only the starting point. The fight against torture, the respect for human rights and of linguistic and cultural rights are as much a question of law as of practice. The practice depends critically on long term changes in human rights education and training both at public and at élite levels (in the police and the judiciary).

The need to concentrate on implementation has been appreciated by the Turkish authorities. Indeed, the government has established human rights boards in major towns and cities, responsible for handling human rights complaints. At the centre, a Human Rights Board has been established to monitor the compliance with the legal reforms. The Board includes representatives of several ministries and government departments.

At the domestic level, aside from the specific requirements of the Accession Partnership, key challenges remain ahead. Two such challenges concern the role of the military and the Kurdish question. As mentioned above, the seventh harmonization package transformed the MGK into an advisory body with a more circumscribed military component. The reforms certainly opened the way to a fundamental civilianization of Turkish politics. However, institutional means alone may be insufficient to circumscribe the power of the military. For example, the military remains one of the strongest economic forces in Turkey. Its economic power inevitably affects its political influence. Furthermore, it may limit to the extent to which the business community (which has proved so pivotal in furthering the reform process), reliant on contracts originating from the military, is willing to push for a full civilianization of Turkish politics.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps most importantly, the role of the military is a reflection of people's expectations. The intense focus of the media, academia and political elites on MGK meetings in the wake of key decisions (such as the decision to send troops to Iraq in the autumn of 2003) shows how expectations take time to change, certainly far more time than is needed to pass constitutional amendments. A reduction of the military's political influence will depend as much on a transformation of the military's assessment of its role as on that of the wider establishment and public opinion.

The harmonization laws have opened the way for a progressive engagement of the Turkish authorities with the Kurdish question. The implementation of the reforms affecting the freedom of expression and association, the right to demonstrate, the use of Kurdish in the media and in education and the increased penalties for the practice of torture will critically and positively transform the conditions of the Kurds in Turkey. In addition the lifting of the state of emergency in the south-east and the recent partial amnesty law are further steps in the right direction.

However, it remains unclear to what extent Kurdish political demands can be met without touching the taboo subject of minority rights in Turkey. The Kemalist Republic, aiming to establish a civic nation, deemed the recognition of national minorities both dangerous and discriminatory. As such, no minorities, other than those mentioned by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne (the Greeks, Armenians and Jews) were acknowledged. In its attempts to tackle the Kurdish question in recent years, the Turkish establishment has been pursuing the path of economic development and human rights in the south-east. It has pursued the implementation of Article 39 of the Lausanne Treaty, which stated that “no restrictions shall be imposed on the free use by any Turkish national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, in religion, in the press, or in publications of any kind or at public meetings.”<sup>8</sup> Most of the political establishment remains firmly opposed to an extension of minority rights to the non-Turkish Muslim communities and most notably to the Kurds. But to what extent can the Kurdish question be resolved in the long run exclusively through the full implementation of individual human rights? In the long term can and should the Turkish establishment persist in opposing communal rights, and perhaps more critically a decentralized form of governance?

Key domestic challenges lie ahead. Important legislative reforms have been undertaken. Yet the more long term changes which hinge upon the gradual transformation of Turkey’s understanding of its identity, its governance and its national security remain ahead. The road may be long and tortuous, but the current authorities, supported by public opinion, appear to be progressing remarkably fast along it; indeed far faster than many observers expected. It remains up to the European Union to support this process of internal transformation, by providing the critical external anchor that will support the progressive domestic forces in their endeavors.



**6<sup>th</sup> AND 7<sup>th</sup> REFORM PACKAGES  
(July 19; July 29, 2003, respectively)**

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**Freedom of Expression**

- The penalties for media outlets in violation of the resolutions of the Supreme Board have been reduced and more clearly defined.
- Article 8 of the anti-terrorism law (propaganda against the indivisibility of the state) was abolished and transferred to the Penal Code. As such while being considered a penal crime to be handled by the judiciary, it is no longer considered a state security matter.
- Amendment of article 159 of the penal code reduces penalties for insults against the state and abolishes penalties for criticism against state institutions and policies.
- Amendments to articles 426 and 427 of the Penal Code abolish provisions allowing for the destruction of critical artistic work.

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**Cultural and Linguistic Rights**

- Programs in languages other than Turkish can be legally transmitted on state and private media channels.
- Extension of the right to learn and use languages other than Turkish through special courses (but not as mother tongue languages).

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**Freedom of Association**

- Extension of the rights of foundations to acquire property.
- Extension of the freedom of establishment and membership of associations.
- Extension of the right to demonstrate.

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**Human Rights**

- Retrial of a case in the event of a contrary verdict of the ECHR.
- Crimes committed in peacetime by non-military persons will no longer be tried in military courts.
- The investigation and prosecution of torture cases is to be considered an urgent matter.

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**The Role of the Military**

- The duties of the MGK were redefined through a narrower definition of national security (article 4).
- The MGK Secretariat General will no longer act as the implementing body of the MGK but only as its secretariat. As such its powers will no longer overlap with those of the executive.
- The MGK will meet every two months. Meetings may be convened only by the prime minister or the president and no longer also by the Chief of General Staff.
- The Secretary General of the MGK is appointed upon a proposal by the Prime Minister for a non-military appointee and with the agreement of the CGS for a military appointee.
- The MGK will no longer receive regular submissions of classified or nonclassified material from public institutions.
- Military spending will be under civilian control.

## EU-Turkey Relations and Foreign Policy Challenges

Moving on to the foreign policy domain, in recent months, EU-Turkey relations have been critically affected both by the Iraq crisis and by the Cyprus conflict.

### *The War in Iraq*

On March 1, 2003, the Turkish parliament rejected the government's proposed motion to allow 62,000 American troops to be deployed on Turkish soil for a second front attack against Iraq. After weeks of uncertainty, the American troops were re-routed to Kuwait.

Many criticized the AKP government for its inexperience in handling the situation. The government's indecisiveness and its failure to invest sufficient effort to ensure a parliamentary approval of the motion could have potentially caused severe repercussions. The AKP government may have mishandled the passing of the motion. The government itself was divided between the disapproval of the public (and large segments of its own electorate) and the need to retain its strategic relationship with the US, particularly at a time when Turkey was struggling to exit a critical economic crisis. It waited for a positive signal from the military which never came and failed to persuade the reluctant parliament. However, the new government did so under extremely complex circumstances. The public was and remains strongly against an American unilateral attack on Iraq. The president (with his strong legal background) also disapproved of an unlegitimized war. The speaker of parliament Bulent Arinc resisted an attack against a Muslim neighbouring country. The military was highly ambivalent about the war primarily because of the American objections to a Turkish intervention in northern Iraq. Finally, for weeks it was unclear whether the war would have been conducted with UN legitimacy. The government understandably preferred to wait for an outcome at the Security Council.

The rejection led to a temporary setback in Turkey-US relations and initially generated new tensions on the EU-Turkey agenda. By rejecting the motion, Turkey lost the six billion-dollar war compensation package and \$24 billions in cheap longterm loans. The financial compensation was lost against the backdrop of the vivid recollection of the severe economic

repercussions of the 1991 Gulf War. Most critically, the incident plunged US-Turkey relations to their lowest ebb since the 1974 arms embargo following the partition of Cyprus. In the aftermath of the rejection of the motion, tensions rose as the US administration strongly warned the Turkish establishment not to intervene in northern Iraq independently of American command. Matters worsened when in July 2003, US troops arrested a Turkish military unit in northern Iraq. EU member states also cautioned Turkey not to intervene in Iraq. Furthermore, several analysts warned that the setback US-Turkey relations within a wider context of a widening transatlantic rift could harm Turkey's EU bid by reducing American support for Turkey's accession process.

However, ensuing events gave rise to greater optimism. In the context of the Iraq crisis, the Turkish government strengthened its relations with the Arab world and Iran, without straining its relations with Israel (on the contrary in September 2003 Turkey concluded a water agreement with Israel) or hinting at a reversal in its western orientation. To date, Turkey has refrained from sending unilaterally additional troops in northern Iraq that could trigger clashes with Iraqi Kurdish forces. As a result Turkish-American relations stabilized.

Most critically, Turkey's conduct added a positive impetus to EU-Turkey relations. The fact that the Turkish government took an independent and democratic decision concerning the war, while at the same time showing restraint in northern Iraq, reverberated positively in Brussels. Indeed, the most Turkey-skeptic member states were precisely the ones which resisted a unilateral American attack in Iraq. As such, Turkey's conduct in the Iraq crisis improved its credentials in Paris and Berlin. Moreover, the motion incident abated member-state fears that Turkey would act as an American Trojan horse in the Union. It showed that Turkey was not simply an American proxy at the European periphery. Back in Turkey, a positive by-product of the Iraq crisis was that it weakened those conservative voices which argued that Turkey's strategic relationship with the US would assure Turkey's EU membership on laxer conditions.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the incident did not lead to a Turkish-American rift, but, more precisely, to a re-evaluation of relations between the Turkish military and the Pentagon.<sup>10</sup> The push for war was driven predominantly by the American Department of Defense, which traditionally emphasized Turkey's strategic significance and enjoyed

extremely close relations with the Turkish military. The failure of the March motion may give way to an increased civilianization of Turkish-American relations. A stronger lead by the State Department may result in a greater focus on Turkish democratization in bilateral relations. As such, while American pressure at European Councils may diminish, the input of Turkey-US relations on Turkey's accession process may be far more fruitful.

Continuing instability in Iraq suggests that important challenges remain ahead. The next key decision is on the deployment of Turkish troops as part of a multi-national force in Iraq. Although the parliament approved the motion authorizing the government to deploy troops in Iraq, both establishment and public opinion remain divided. On the one hand, the prevailing feeling in Ankara is that "Turkey cannot say no again." Rejecting again American demands for Turkish support could damage irreparably the Turkish-American relationship. Furthermore, the Turkish establishment is concerned about the increasingly strong ties between the US and the Iraqi Kurds. It views with suspicion the prominent role accorded to the Kurds in the Governing Council in Baghdad. And it is aware that the strong relationship is a product of the unreserved Iraqi Kurdish support for the American war effort. Finally, Turkey feels that accepting American demands would pave its way into the lucrative Iraqi reconstruction effort.

On the other hand, the Turkish public remains firmly opposed to any Turkish involvement in collaboration with the American occupiers. Why should Turkish forces perish in support of an illegitimate and misconceived American war? Indeed Turkish troops could face serious attacks by Kurdish militants in Northern Iraq. In connection to this it should be noted that on 1 September 2003 the PKK/KADEK (Kurdish Workers Party – Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress) declared an end to its unilateral ceasefire which followed the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999. Allegedly, the ceasefire was broken because of Ankara's failure to reciprocate. However, its timing is certainly also linked to the government's partial amnesty law.

In order to persist with a consistent policy towards Iraq and in the light of these contrasting considerations the most fruitful course of action could be for Turkey to refrain from deploying troops on the ground unless explicitly mandated by a Security Council resolution. By doing so, Turkey would act in accordance with its own constitution, it would minimize the negative

repercussions of its intervention and it would enhance the credibility of its government in its commitment to democracy and the rule of law.

### *The Cyprus Conflict*

Yet perhaps an even more fundamental challenge in Turkey-EU relations concerns Cyprus, particularly in view of the forthcoming accession of the island. Due to the obstacles posed in Turkey's European path by the accession of a divided island, there has been a basic overlap between hardliners on the Cyprus conflict and the nationalist and Euro-skeptic forces in Turkey. To the most conservative forces within the Turkish establishment, the EU accession process is viewed as a threat to Turkey's Cyprus policy. Furthermore, an intransigent position on Cyprus added another obstacle in Turkey's EU path, and thus dampened the momentum in favor of what some viewed as threatening domestic reforms.

At the same time, the lack of a committed EU policy towards Turkey strengthened the arguments of nationalist and Euro-skeptic forces in Ankara and Leukosia (northern Cyprus) that argued against an early settlement within the EU. Moderates and reformists in Turkey accepted that because of Turkey's own shortcomings, Cyprus's EU membership would occur prior to Turkey's. However, they could not accept that because of allegedly unchangeable features of the Turkish state and society, Cyprus would mark the borders of the united Europe, keeping Cyprus and Turkey on opposite sides of the European divide. So long as Turkey's fundamental skepticism of European intentions persisted, a settlement in Cyprus would be viewed by Ankara as "losing Cyprus" rather than sealing a win-win agreement.

As the Copenhagen Council (December 2003) came closer, the AKP government displayed a fundamental shift from earlier Administrations concerning Cyprus. It both declared openly that it did not regard a continuation of the *status quo* as a solution. In fact, it appeared willing to recognize the link between Turkey-EU relations and a Cyprus settlement. In the run-up to Copenhagen, the government effectively argued that if the European Council gave Turkey an early and firm date to begin accession negotiations, the government would support a Cyprus settlement on the basis of the comprehensive UN proposal known as the Annan Plan.

If we judge by events, the Copenhagen offer was insufficient to induce Turkey and Turkish Cypriots to sign an agreement on the December 13, 2002 and thereafter. This ultimate failure was not only caused by miscalculated Turkish bargaining tactics, but was fundamentally linked to Turkey's mistrust of Europe. Whether a deal would have been reached if Turkey had received an earlier and firmer date, or if the EU had formulated a more resolute and coherent policy towards Turkey before the European Council, will remain unknown. But what was clear was that the Turkish government considered these conditions as the minimum assurance to hedge against this prevailing mistrust. Pressure alone would be insufficient to clinch an agreement.

After the Copenhagen Council, matters continued to oscillate as the product of an ongoing battle between elements pushing for or against a settlement. Different positions and rationales were continuously aired. Those skeptical of Turkey's future in Europe persisted in their effective opposition to Cyprus' EU membership and hence the UN plan. Those in favour of Turkey's EU membership but unsatisfied with the Copenhagen decision proposed a postponement of a settlement until Turkey's EU prospects became clearer (date suggested: December 2004). Other pro-Europeans pushed for an early settlement based on the UN plan. They appreciated the difficulty of reaching an agreement following Cyprus's EU membership (May 2004) and understood that the international burden would be placed predominantly on Turkey's shoulders in the future. The most evident manifestation of this flux of ideas was the effective rift between the AKP government and the Turkish Cypriot leadership.

With the failure of negotiations at The Hague, for which the Turkish Cypriots were primarily blamed, conservatives in Turkey and northern Cyprus appeared to have won the day. However, The Hague meeting might have temporarily sealed the fate of the Annan plan but it did not entail the end of debate in northern Cyprus and Turkey. The Cyprus challenge remains on the table. It will have to be tackled if Turkey progresses along its path to the Union.

There are strong reasons for Turkey to pursue a settlement prior to the effective accession of Cyprus in May 2004. The scope to do so exists, as evidenced by the opening of the border point in Cyprus in April 2003 and ensuing flux of people crossing the green line. Politically, the opportunity for

change might emerge after the formation of a new Turkish-Cypriot government in January 2004, in the aftermath of the December 2003 parliamentary elections in northern Cyprus. The extent to which this opportunity will be seized depends on whether the Turkish establishment will have reached a consensus concerning an early settlement on the island, a consensus that had not yet emerged in March 2003.

The EU could certainly raise incentives in Cyprus and Turkey for an early settlement. It could do so by supporting the pro-reformist elements in the country by clarifying that if the pending reforms are indeed implemented, accession negotiations would start in early 2005. In other words, accession negotiations following the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria would not be a mere probability but a credible EU commitment.

Concerted EU voices should also clarify their position regarding the link between Turkey's accession and a Cyprus settlement. At the moment the position is ridden by a disunity of voices and underlying contradictions. On the one hand EU voices argue that a Cyprus settlement would facilitate Turkey's accession process. Yet some argue that the road to Turkey's membership passes through Nicosia.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the Turkish government embraced the logic of linkage by suggesting that if it endorsed the Annan Plan, it should be compensated with a firm date to begin accession negotiations. To this the Union replied that a Cyprus settlement is a necessary but insufficient condition for accession negotiations. This attitude in turn generated resentment in Turkey and validated the positions of Euro-skeptics, who criticized the inherent bias of the Union. Turks observed that while a settlement was not a condition for Cyprus's accession it had become a condition for Turkey.

There appears to be no clearcut way out of this dilemma other than reiterating unanimously that the Copenhagen criteria are the only necessary conditions for Turkey's accession negotiations. A Cyprus settlement would facilitate the process but is currently not a precondition. As a result, the Turkish government should not hold onto Cyprus hoping to induce a better EU decision. By doing so, Turkey would fail to win EU support for its membership drive. This would reduce the ability of EU governments to exert pressure on the Greek-Cypriot side and it would most likely end up in a situation post-May 2004 in which the Annan plan in its current form may no longer be an option.

NOTES

1. Devlet Bahçeli quoted in “Bahçeli Toughens on EU and Its Domestic Supporters,” *Turkish Daily News*, March 4, 2002.
2. Gunduz Aktan, “New Consensus,” *Turkish Daily News*, March 3, 2002.
3. Indeed, for the AKP, emerging from the succession of banned Islamic parties, greater political freedom is viewed as critical to its very survival as a political party.
4. Giscard Remarks Cause Uproar in Ankara, Brussels,” *Turkish Daily News*, November 11, 2002.
5. Conversations with Turkish journalist and academic, Brussels, December 2002.
6. “Council Decision of 19 May 2003 on the principles, priorities, intermediate objectives and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with Turkey,” *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 145/40, June 12, 2003.
7. Ziya Onis, “Domestic Politics, International Norms and Challenges to the State: Turkey-EU Relations in the Post-Helsinki Era,” *Turkish Studies*, vol.4, no.1 (Spring 2003), pp.9-34.
8. *Treaty of Lausanne* (1923), Article 39.
9. Kemal Kirisci, ‘The West and Its Institutions: Losing Allies but Gaining Converts – the Case of Turkey,’ draft paper prepared for the conference on Geopolitical Change, the Use of Force, and New Strategic Doctrines, 12-14 September, 2003, Lansdowne Resort, Leesburg, Virginia.
10. Henri Barkey, “Turkey’s Strategic Future: a US Perspective,” paper presented at the European Security Forum organized by the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the Institute of International Strategic Studies (IISS), Brussels, June 2003.
11. *TurkishPress.com*, January 3, 2003.