

MERIA

THE EARTHQUAKE, EUROPE, AND PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL CHANGE IN TURKEY

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Two events in 1999—the Marmara earthquake and the European Union's (EU) conditional acceptance of Turkey's candidacy for membership--offered hope for liberalization and democratization in Turkey. In the first case, the earthquake was viewed as a factor mobilizing civil society as a force "from below" that could engender political reform. In the second, the EU became a factor providing outside pressure for change. This article suggests that the energy generated from the earthquake's aftermath has largely dissipated and that there is strong opposition from powerful forces in Turkey to meeting key EU recommendations. While there has been a change in rhetoric, making a change in policy is proving very difficult.

The wave of democratization that swept over much of the world in the 1990s appeared to have bypassed Turkey. Instead of experiencing a democratic breakthrough, the Turkish political system remained plagued by several problems compromising its democracy, issues further illustrated by the March 2001 financial crisis and its aftermath. These included a Kurdish insurgency; human rights violations; prohibitions on some political parties; corruption; thinly veiled interventions by the military into the political arena; and low public confidence in key democratic institutions. The 1999 parliamentary elections produced a coalition government that seemed likely to be torn between formerly implacable enemies on the nationalist right and the social-democratic left.(1)

Turkey is certainly an electoral democracy but lacks many features of a liberal democracy.(2) One Turkish political scientist dubbed Turkey a "delegative democracy," marked by personalist rule, lack of accountability, and a penchant for authoritarian behavior.(3) However the

system is labeled, it seems well entrenched, and despite talk of reform throughout the decade, politics-as-usual remained the order of the day.

Two events in the second half of 1999 brought about renewed hope for political liberalization. The first was the Marmara earthquake in August that, in addition to causing human and material losses, exposed fissures in the edifice of the Turkish state. The hope among many was that these cracks would be filled by a resurgent civil society that could push for change "from below." The second event was the decision by the European Union (EU) at its December summit in Helsinki to accept Turkey's candidacy for membership. The expectation was that the EU would help push for change, prompting Turkey to undertake measures to eliminate its democratic deficit in exchange for admission to full membership. Arguably, one can already see results of the EU's lobbying. A new president, one with solid reform credentials, has been elected, and his push for a more liberal and open government has brought him into open

conflict with the current government, triggering the financial meltdown earlier this year.

A year later, one can better assess how these two events and the ostensible agents of change--civil society and the EU--are re-shaping Turkish politics. In other contexts, both actors have been deemed instrumental in the processes of democratization.(4) Past results elsewhere, however, do not guarantee success in Turkey today. While the debate in Turkey has undoubtedly been transformed by these events, one wonders if this will lead to broad changes in the polity itself. This article will therefore examine the ability of Turkish civil society and the EU to compel Turkish elites to open up the political system and further processes of democratic consolidation.

SHORTCOMINGS OF DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY

If a democracy is viewed exclusively in terms of Joseph Schumpeter's terms, as a system in which "individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote,"(5) then Turkey qualifies as a democracy. However, this is a minimalist definition, and many would contend that democracies depend upon other factors in order to function and be consolidated. These include basic civic freedoms, the rule of law, respect for human rights, measures of accountability, civil society, a restrained military, and popular support for democratic values and institutions.(6) Turkey has long-standing difficulties in several of these areas. Numerous authors have tackled these subjects, and they have identified causes ranging from the Ottoman state tradition to Ataturk's legacies to Turkish political culture and deep cleavages in society.(7) A detailed

discussion need not detain us long, but one should be aware of some of the major problems facing the Turkish polity in the 1990s and how they impinge upon democratization.

Human rights are commonly cited as the largest blemish on Turkey's democratic record. Many, but certainly not all, of these problems are connected with the Kurdish insurgency/terrorist actions.(8) Fighting with the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) broke out in 1984 and has claimed over 30,000 lives. Both sides have been accused of massive human rights violations.(9) Away from the front lines, individuals, both Turks and ethnic Kurds, calling for peaceful dialogue or a serious discussion of Kurdish concerns have been imprisoned under Article 312 of the penal code, which criminalizes speech deemed to provoke ethnic or religious enmity. Turkey ranks among the leaders in the world for imprisoned journalists, and several leading human rights activists have also been imprisoned. The capture and imprisonment of the PKK's leader, Abdullah Ocalan in early 1999 helped produce a Turkish military victory but the question of language or cultural rights has been raised again by the EU membership criteria.

A related problem in Turkey is the powerful role of the military in politics.(10) The military has directly intervened to overthrow three governments in 1960, 1971, and 1980, and in 1997 played a central role in forcing the Islamist prime minister, Necmettin Erbakan, to resign. Seeing Islamists and Kurds as threats to the state's survival, the military uses its institutionalized role in the National Security Council to set policy in these areas. It also exercises a role in the State Security Courts, a constitutional body that deals with all political crimes. In 1998, the European Court of Human Rights

declared that these courts--because they allow civilians to be judged by the military--violate human rights.(11)

Defenders of the military's role say that it intervenes only to save democracy from incapable politicians and enjoys popular support in doing so. Indeed, over 71 percent of the public in a 1997 survey expressed high trust in it.(12) Nonetheless, civilian politicians lack control over the military while the military can veto some government policies or decisions. Today the military remains the most reticent actor on topics of political liberalization, and overcoming military opposition is a formidable challenge to all elected leaders.

There are also limits on political competition in Turkey. By law, political parties cannot be based on class, region, ethnicity, or religion. This provision has been sporadically enforced, but in the 1990s, two groups--Kurds and Islamists--were brought into court on this issue. In 1993 and 1994, the pro-Kurdish People's Labor and Democratic parties were banned, and in 1998 the Islamist *Refah* (Welfare) party, the leading vote-getter in the 1995 elections, was similarly prohibited. Both groups simply changed their name and reorganized the parties, the Kurds as the Peoples' Democratic Party (HADEP) and the Islamists as *Fazilet* (Virtue), but they remain under the threat of closure and several leaders are serving prison terms.

More generally speaking, one can argue that democracy in Turkey is handicapped by a strong state tradition which fosters paternalism (the "father state," *devlet baba*) and constrains civil society and independent voices. Traditionally, civic groups have been seen as accessories of the state, not as genuine partners able to initiate action on their own. Ataturk's notion of "populism" stressed the organic

unity of Turkish society, which was "without classes, without differences."(13) The state was therefore hostile to independent groups with their own agenda, as this would rip the interwoven fabric of Turkish society. State corporatism, in which the state created and guided various groups, was the norm.

This past continues to be reflected in the current constitutional order. Article 13 of the constitution, written in 1982 under military rule, includes a host of restrictions. The state has the right to interpret vague notions such as "public interest" and "public morals,"(14) in effect giving it the power to stop actions it does not like--ranging from workers' protests to demonstrations by mothers of the "disappeared." The law governing non-government associations is criticized in a report by the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD) as "one of the most antidemocratic of laws in Turkish legislation."(15) Professor Ersin Kalaycioglu notes that the laws reflect "serious misgivings" about civil society organizations and dissuades people from joining them.(16) Restrictions on civic groups are only sporadically enforced but, according to one report, in 1999 there were 30 closings of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and 387 cases of harassment, mostly to Islamic, human rights, or suspected Kurdish groups.(17)

Turkish democracy also suffers from corruption and stagnation. Interior Minister Saadettin Tantan ranks corruption as the primary threat to stability today.(18) It is also well-entrenched. Investigations into the 1996 Susurluk scandal--in which a member of parliament, a law enforcement official, and an internationally wanted criminal were found together in a wrecked automobile along with thousands of

dollars in cash and weapons with silencers--brought no convictions, despite massive public outcry. In November 2000, several banking scandals, one involving the nephew of former President Suleyman Demirel, threw prospects for economic reform and stability into doubt. These have been compounded by more bank failures and an open schism between President Ahmet N. Sezer and the government headed by Bulent Ecevit on efforts to fight corruption.

In addition, the leaders of several major parties--Tansu Ciller of the True Path Party, Mesut Yilmaz of the Motherland Party, and Erbakan of *Refah*, all former prime ministers--have been accused of corruption, but squashed a full inquiry by supporting each other in parliament. The fact that Ciller and Yilmaz remain heads of their parties after this problem and their electoral defeats in 1999, points to the additional difficulty of political stagnation. The parties themselves are not run in a democratic manner, making it difficult for new ideas and leaders to emerge from below.(19)

This problem connects with those of trust in many political institutions and a somewhat ambivalent attitude toward democracy. The Turkish component of the 1997 World Values Survey, based upon a sample of 1,907 respondents, found that Turks had rather low levels of trust in political parties (30%), the government (51%) and parliament (52%). What is perhaps more disturbing is the high number of respondents stating they would like a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament (41%), a government run by experts, not elected officials (55%), or a military government (33 percent). Turks were also more likely than respondents in established democracies to agree (65%) that democracy produces much disorder, they

ranked among the lowest in the world in inter-personal trust (10%), and indicated attitudes consistent with low political participation. Nevertheless, 92% agreed that despite its problems, democracy was better than any other form of government. In sum, the survey gives a somewhat mixed rating of a democratic political culture in Turkey.(20)

What is most important to bear in mind about these features is that they seemed to be generally permanent in the Turkish political system. Something would have to emerge to change this situation. In 1999, two events--the earthquake and the EU's decision to consider Turkish membership--arguably altered the political arena in Turkey. But were these events harbingers for real and lasting change?

THE EARTHQUAKE, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND REFORM

The Marmara earthquake of August 17 was both a natural and a political disaster. In addition to death and destruction, the event also highlighted weaknesses in the Turkish political system.(21) National and local governments, the Red Crescent, and the military were all subjected to scathing criticism for a long list of problems. The State Earthquake Fund was found to have only the equivalent of \$2 in it.(22) Government officials were accused of having taken bribes to allow shoddy construction that collapsed with a large loss of life. Relief teams and materials arrived late, if at all, and officials of the Turkish Red Crescent were found to have embezzled funds and sold donated equipment.

The army's first orders were to establish security, and military units were slow to pitch in with rescue efforts of civilians. President Demirel's motorcade

held up ambulances taking victims to the hospital, and all he could do to console victims was call the tragedy “God’s will,” an event whose handling could not be questioned. The health minister caused a furor by rejecting blood arriving from Greece. He also showed little compassion for victims by dismissing the need for portable toilets, suggesting instead that the displaced simply use the nearby Sea of Marmara.(23) Together, these problems plunged the state into a crisis of legitimacy, as the image of an all-powerful, if not all-benevolent, state was shattered. One Turkish columnist concluded, “This earthquake created a faultline in the Turkish political system. Everyone saw how inept the whole system is--the bureaucracy, the state mechanism. What collapsed is the whole system. In the long run, the ramifications will be very drastic.”(24)

If there was any positive outcome from this tragedy, it was the role played by Turkish citizens and citizens’ organizations. People rushed in to search for victims, supply food and medicine, and build shelters for the displaced. Many groups came together to form a Civil Coordination Center (CCC) to make their work more effective. Some, such as Search and Rescue Association (AKUT), became media stars, and their heroics stood in stark contrast to the performance of state organs. This phenomenon--civil society responding to natural disaster--is common, and disaster relief specialists have noted that these events “often bring changes in the structure of community leadership” and create “potential” for significant political and social change.(25)

The general hope was that civil society--as an agent--would be able to overcome the many structural factors that had long favored the “*devlet baba*.” As Alan Makovsky of the Washington

Institute for Near East Policy explained, “It was a cliché about Turkey for decades that civic associations don’t work and that people sit back and wait for the state to do everything. That’s a cliché in the process of being erased from the Turkish lexicon.”(26) One Turkish observer expressed the hope that the 21st century would be the “century of civil society.”(27)

Much of this optimism has subsided. True, many groups are still active, and certainly civic organizations enjoy a higher profile in Turkey than before the disaster. However, they have been unable to sustain their level of political mobilization or come together to spearhead a push for sweeping reforms beyond the arena of public safety and disaster preparedness. Civil society, one could say, exists more as a slogan than as a reality. By the first anniversary of the quake, hope for political reform had been largely displaced onto the European Union or to President Sezer. In other words, Turkish civil society was no longer viewed as the primary agent for change; if change was to come, it would be either “from outside” or “from above,” both concepts having a long traditions in Ottoman-Turkish history.

Why did this pessimistic prospect for Turkish civil society take place? One important point in evaluating the issue is that Turkish civil society is far from homogeneous. Relief organizations span the entire spectrum of Turkish politics. Some have a liberal orientation; some are *status-quo*-oriented or “Kemalist”; many are Islamist; a few are alleged to have mafia links;(28) many are apolitical. Some are clearly adversarial to the state; some are described as “semi-official” or have close ties to the state machinery.(29)

Coordination among groups was therefore difficult. The CCC was primarily composed of liberal groups. Islamist

organizations, working together with the *Fazilet* Party, coordinated their own efforts. In my research in the summer of 2000, I contacted dozens of NGOs in Turkey and asked them whether they worked closely with others. None reported systemic cooperation, and many complained about the ineffectiveness and over-bureaucratic nature of the CCC, which prevented it from sustaining any sort of cooperation.(30) Other problems also limited cooperation. For example, several local search-and-rescue teams proposed creating a larger organization under the CCC but AKUT, by far the largest, refused, claiming there was no need to do so and it could not ensure that other groups were of high standards.(31) If these groups could not join together, it is hard to imagine how more political and social-oriented ones could. In other words, while all groups might agree that things need to change in Turkey, there is no consensus as to the directions of such changes. Thus, loosely tied networks of relief organizations could not transform themselves into a movement for broader *political* change.

The second obstacle faced by civil society was the state's reaction against it. Immediately after the earthquake, government officials spoke out against AKUT, accusing it of trying to make the state look bad and of not really helping people.(32) Many groups had their bank accounts frozen or materials confiscated, as the state maintained that only the Red Crescent was authorized to engage in relief work. Islamic groups complained the state overstepped its authority and played favorites, allowing some to work but harassing others.(33)

Later, the government required all groups to register, which one report saw as a thinly veiled effort to keep out those "who may deliver assistance together with

a dose of 'reactionary' religious indoctrination."(34) Within a couple of months, some groups--particularly Islamist ones--were forced to abandon their soup kitchens and tent cities, as all materials had to be handed over to the government-backed Red Crescent or pulled out of the area. Other groups, however, managed to stay on by concluding agreements with state ministries and local governments. Few, if any, of these groups protested the actions taken against the Islamists. Moreover, the success of arrangements would often depend upon good relations with the military. One organizer of a relief effort conceded that in order to overcome problems posed by local military officials, she would have to tell them, "My generals outrank your generals."(35)

Few wanted to challenge the state openly. This was clearest and perhaps most significant in the case of AKUT, whose standing in the public mind-set dwarfed that of any other group. AKUT's president was gently rebuked at one roundtable for refusing to lead a more aggressive campaign against the state's handling of relief measures or take on a more political agenda. He defended his decision, claiming AKUT had no capacity or desire to play such roles.(36) Others who have remained among the most active and well-financed--Turkish Education Volunteers, Human Resource Foundation, Human Settlement Foundation, Lions and Rotary Clubs--are apolitical or avoid the most divisive issues in Turkish politics. Many thought that involvement in politics would tarnish their relief work or lead to pressures on them from above, and thus there has not been a connection (with the exception of the Islamists) between groups in civil society and expressly political groups such as parties.

Another weakness of civil society was that it lacked a proper structure or

strong roots. As the CCC's director conceded, civil society is less a "society" than simply thousands of volunteers.(37) The groups sprang up out of nowhere and had no agenda other than helping their fellow citizens. This energy could not be sustained or channeled into new directions. Today these groups, with the exception of AKUT, do not find themselves with significantly more members or funds. Thus, not only did they run up against the state structure, but they themselves lacked the basic resources to push harder for a democratic breakthrough. As one commentator noted, "The opportunity was in our hands, but we dropped the ball."(38)

Over a year after the quake, the energy and hopes invested in civil society was noticeably dissipated. One leader of the CCC acknowledged that the one-year anniversary would be marked more by prayers than protest at such problems as the appalling housing for many survivors and the fact that many of the same contractors who had built shoddy homes were now receiving contracts for the rebuilding effort.(39) The law granting a government/Red Crescent monopoly on relief work, a target for change in the days after the quake, remains on the books. Some leaders speak lamely of a change in public attitudes, but no survey gives clear support to this notion.(40) Discontent remains but has been insufficient to launch a movement for broad political change "from below." A leader familiar with many of the relief efforts and an advocate of political reform expresses disappointment:

Many had hoped and expected a better coordinated civil society to emerge. But this did not happen. The earthquake was forgotten by some, and the state has seven hundred years of experience in organization, in keeping society in

check. Civil society did not have this. In the end, the state had the upper hand and prevailed.(41)

However, this does not mean that all hopes for reform or civil society are dead. Powerful actors in Turkish civil society, especially business organizations, largely sat on the sidelines and refrained from vocal criticism of the authorities immediately after the earthquake. However, they have since been active in pushing for reform, pointedly switching from purely economic concerns to far more sensitive political ones.(42) However, rather than linking up with the earthquake-oriented civic groups, they have tended to look upon the European Union as the ally with the most to offer.

THE EU AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE

The EU's decision in December 1999 to consider Turkey's candidacy for membership came as a sharp break from earlier policy. As recently as 1997, the EU had rejected Turkey's membership bid outright (while accepting those from many ex-Communist countries), citing a variety of political and economic concerns. At that time, some EU leaders were unusually open in their criticism of Turkey. Luxemburg's Jean Claude Juncker, then presiding over the EU announced that the EU would not sit at the negotiating table with a country where there is torture. Wilifried Martens, chair of Belgian Christian Democratic Party, announced that Europe was a "civilizational project" and that Turkey's bid to join--given its culture--was "unacceptable."(43) Turks were mostly outraged with this decision, with one Turkish daily proclaiming "Go to Hell, Europe!"(44) Many argued that such a decision was blatantly unfair, as Turkey was part of Europe, a member of many European and Western organizations, and

had waited years for membership, in contrast to those Eastern European states which jumped into the line.(45)

Despite the fact that membership in the EU is seen as the “crowning achievement of a process began in the nineteenth century,” as one scholar put it, (46) Turkish-European relations have had numerous troubles including human rights issues, Greece and Cyprus, and a lingering belief that Turkey remains outside European cultural norms.(47) Despite signing an Association Agreement with the EC in 1963, membership has been slow in coming. An application in 1987 was rejected out of hand, and hopes that the Customs Union, which went into effect in January 1996, would lead to membership were dashed in 1997.

The EU's policy reversal in 1999, signaling a willingness to consider Turkish membership if the Turks could meet the Copenhagen Criteria, (48) was thus a major event in Turkish-EU relations and within Turkey itself. But now the EU insisted that achieving the long-desired membership would require Turkey to adopt numerous reforms, particularly on freedom of expression and political organization and on human rights.

There are several reasons to expect Turkey to meet this test. Several commentators, for example, have pointed to prior positive influence of the EU in promoting economic and political reforms in Turkey.(49) Possible examples cited include the return to civilian rule in 1983, market liberalization, the lifting of various political restrictions in 1987, repeals on bans on using the Kurdish language, and changes in the Anti-Terror Law in 1995. The EU could also claim some effect on the fate of Ocalan, who has been sentenced to death, but may escape hanging partly due to objections from the EU and other organizations in Europe. Pending final

resolution of that case, Turkey may also ban the death penalty to conform to European norms, and there is extensive discussion in the Turkish press of the need for constitutional reform, particularly on issues of freedom of speech and political competition.

Another factor is the support of all Turkish political parties--including the previously-opposed Islamists--in favor of joining the EU. However, this does not guarantee they are willing to take the steps demanded by Europe. Feelings of nationalism, pride, sovereignty, fear of creating domestic instability, and opposition to specific things being demanded are among the causes for rejecting these demands. There are suspicions of Europeans as having sought to carve pieces from the country's national territory after World War One, the so-called “Sevres Syndrome” for the 1919 Treaty that would have dismembered the Ottoman Empire. European support for Armenian and Kurdish groups opposing Turkey also does not bolster Europe's image in the eyes of many Turks. There is a strong belief that Western Europeans are prejudiced against Turks.(50) Public opinion surveys in 1990 and 1997 (before the decision was made to exclude Turkey) reveal high levels of distrust of the EU.(51) In the past, Turkey has paid little attention or mere lip service to previous European condemnations of Turkish policy, particularly with respect to the Kurds. Moreover, it is worth noting that Turkey can (and has successfully done so in the past) play off the EU and the United States, counting on virtually unconditional support from the latter. Thus, even if the EU makes domestic reform in Turkey a top priority (and it may lose interest or fudge Turkey's “progress”), Turkey may not prove to be subservient to EU demands.

What is most discernible in Turkey today is ambivalence about the nation's prospective membership bid. While the goal of ascension to the EU is clearly desired, this does not mean a willingness to meet European demands. For example, the EU wants Turkey to recognize the Kurds as a minority and to grant them rights guaranteeing their ability to express and preserve their language and culture, including media and schools in Kurdish. This step remains anathema to most of the Turkish political spectrum, which notes that Kurds are treated the same as all other citizens and do not qualify as a minority under the terms of the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, which gave international recognition to the Turkish Republic.(52)

The EU also wants a series of reforms to broaden speech protections and prohibit the state from banning political parties. These steps also remain controversial, and when Turkish political figures have echoed the need to reform the constitution, the military has made clear its opposition.(53) Even the smaller and largely symbolic (no official executions have occurred since 1984) step of abolishing the death penalty has provoked debate and the nationalist party coalition member threatened to bring down the government in response to such a step.

One important problem here is that the EU takes for granted its right to intervene in the affairs of member countries. Turks see the EU membership as a symbol of full acceptance as a modern, European country, as well as large amounts of economic aid. Yet if Turkey were to become an equal member, it would have to accept a great deal of interference in its domestic affairs and a clear loss of national sovereignty, particularly on such sensitive issues as human rights, constitutional reform, and the role of the military. A small symbol of this issue is the outrage

that erupted when a rumor spread that the EU might prohibit the sale of a beloved national dish, kokorec, grilled lamb intestines.

Ziya Onis persuasively argues that Turkish policymakers do not fully realize how the EU has changed in recent years, in particular in emphasizing human rights. Turkish elites are likely to prove very unwilling to make all the changes desired by the EU, and thus the transition to full membership will be "slow and protracted."(54)

Indeed, there is plenty of evidence to question whether this transition will take place at all. The sticking points are, predictably, the Kurds and the role of the Turkish military in politics. Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit has denied there is even a "Kurdish" issue, claiming the problem is primarily caused by the relative poverty of southeastern Turkey, where most of the Kurds live. Deputy Prime Minister, Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), has emphatically declared that Kurdish education and broadcast was "not going to happen."(55) Another MHP deputy, responding to the general concern of Europe on human rights, claimed that issues that "go against the fiber of our country are not matters open to discussion."(56) When some leaders, such as Foreign Minister as Ismail Cem, seemed willing to agree that Kurds should have a right to broadcast in Kurdish, he was rebuked by Demirel, who said this would lead to separatist violence.(57)

In November 2000, after the EU offered an accession partnership agreement (one that pointedly did not include the word "Kurds"), Ecevit appeared ready to compromise but Bahçeli was insistent. "It is impossible to say that the European Commission is making a goodwill approach. It is not possible for Turkey to look warmly at cultural and ethnic rights

that can fuel ethnic clashes and division.”(58) The current Turkish government risks collapse if it tries to meet EU criteria on this thorny issue. While new elections could help solve this problem, there is no guarantee they would produce a coalition more amenable to EU suggestions.

Equally serious has been the reaction of the military, which has opposed EU encroachments on its political role and issues it sees as national security questions. In addition to granting Kurds cultural rights, Turkey is also being asked to reform the National Security Council and State Security Courts to ensure civilian control over the military--an EU norm. The military has resisted any such moves, claiming that the requirements go too far and are not “in line with Turkey’s reality.”(59) Mesut Yilmaz, deputy prime minister in charge of relations with Europe, said the army believed that the reforms required by the EU would split up the country.(60) Some observers might note that the military might make some concessions on certain matters, but at this point it does not seem ready to embrace the EU’s recommendations in their entirety.

In short, as one report concluded, “while Turkish officials continue to play lip service to the idea of EU membership, there is so far little evidence that the state establishment has fully grasped the fundamental shift in mentality, the willingness to compromise and work with others, that EU membership would entail.”(61) Another author, noting that some small steps have been taken, concluded sadly that Turks have been like students doing homework only because the teacher tells them to do it; there is no recognition that the “work” might actually be necessary or valuable.(62) Given that Turkey has yet to really tackle the most sensitive issues, it is not unreasonable to

conclude that “it is not clear that Turkey in the end will want to become part of the EU” (63) At minimum, a radical shift in prevailing attitudes would have to occur for government leaders to have the confidence to make reforms and not be punished at the ballot box, to say nothing of actions by the military. One does not, as yet, see the emergence of an unequivocal pro-EU party, much less a pro-EU coalition.

To some extent, the EU is equally unenthusiastic and ready to seize on disagreements to avoid giving membership to Turkey. The EU has a full plate with expansion to several former members of the Soviet bloc in Europe and with its own internal reform. Given that Turkey is relatively large, less economically developed, has problems with Greece, and might be a major source of immigrants, Europe is not likely to be in a big hurry to accept Turkey as a member. As a result, if Turks grow skeptical that they will ever be let in, the EU's leverage for reform will further decline.

A possible alternative would be if the EU would cave in to Turkish sensitivities and reduce its demands. European governments in the past have been unwilling to press too strongly for reform, and Turkish governments have used this factor to water down reform.(64) Certainly Turks could weaken EU demands by noting that many European governments place restrictions on speech and political activity (especially against would-be Nazi parties) for the sake of state security, and Turkey does no different in its battle against separatists or Islamists who threaten the fundamental constitutional order.(65) In short, the EU standing firm and Turkey making the necessary reforms is only one of several possible outcomes, and not necessarily the most likely.

Finally, even if Turkey were to make concessions on key points, will they make a great difference? Kurdish may be legalized as a language for media and education, but new questions would be raised: will the state fund Kurdish-language schools? Who will draw up the curriculum for them and will students be taught a "Kurdish" version of history? Will the state license a Kurdish-language TV station? What is the line between expressing culture and endorsing separatism? As for taking the military out of politics, it will be hard to eliminate the informal role the military plays and it might continue to enjoy continued legal protection against those who would impugn its "moral character." In short, there are a host of unknowns. It is naïve both to assume that meeting EU conditions would not cause further problems for Turkey and to believe that joining the EU or doing what the EU wants--while possibly helpful in a variety of respects--would eradicate all the shortcomings of Turkish democracy and society is naïve.

CONCLUSION

It is still fair to argue that the prospects of deepening democracy in Turkey are better today than at any time in the past decade. The war with the PKK is essentially over. A new president speaks passionately about the need to adopt liberal reforms. The EU is offering a substantial carrot if Turkey can tackle some of its democratic shortcomings.

Significant barriers remain, however, sufficient to raise doubts that much will actually change. At present, there no denying that there is much rhetoric about change. Much of this, however, has been heard before, and reform--if it came at all--was modest at best and often disappointing. Some had hoped that forces for liberalization would

be unleashed by the earthquake. While that tragedy may have created an opening, it is now largely closed. Europe may be able to push harder for a democratic breakthrough, and clearly some Turks, including President Sezer, would be amenable to such an undertaking. Yet powerful forces are working against such moves. Even minimal concessions on the Kurdish issue, legal changes, or limits on the army's political influence could bring down governments. Moreover, change "from above" or "from outside" may do little to further a broader democratic ethos or repair an ossified party system.

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NOTES

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7. Robert Bianchi, *Interest Groups and Political Development in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (North Humberstone UK: Eothen Press, 1985); Heper and Ahmet Evin, eds. *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic* (Boulder: Westview, 1994); and Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent: Turkish Nationalism and the Turkish Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

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9. Some of the more comprehensive reports come from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department. The latter concedes that there continue to be 'serious' human rights violations. The 1999 version of their reports can be found at

www.igc.org/hrw/worldreport99/europe/turkey.html and

www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1999_hrp_report/turkey.html

10. William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London: Routledge, 1994).

11. Meltem Muftuler-Bac, 'The Impact of the European Union on Turkish Politics,' *East European Quarterly*, Vol.34, no.2 (June 2000), p. 169

12. Yilmaz Esmer, *Devrim, Evrim, Statuko: Turkiye'de Sosyal, Siyasal, Ekonomik Degerler* (Istanbul: TESEV, 1999), p. 42.

13. Bianchi, *Interest Groups*, 1984, p. 102.

14. Bulent Tanor, *Perspectives on Democratisation in Turkey* (Istanbul: TUSIAD [Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association], 1997), p. 105.

15. Ibid, p. 154.

16. Ersin Kalaycioglu, 'Good Governance and Human Development in Turkey,' *Human Development Report: Turkey 1998* (Ankara: United Nations Development Programme, 1998), p. 40.

17. *Turkiye'de Insan Haklari: 1999 Yili Analizi* (Ankara: Mazlumder, 2000), pp. 109-113.

18. Saadettin Tantan in *Middle East International*, no. 637, 10 November 2000, p. 16.

19. For more on contemporary problems of corruption and party management, see Ozbudun, 2000, and James Meyer, 'Politics as Usual: Ciller, Refah, and Susurluk: Turkey's Troubled Democracy,' *East European Quarterly*, Vol.32, no.4 (Winter 1998), pp. 489-502.

20. All from Esmer, 1999.

21. See Alpaslan Ozerdem and Sultan Barakat, "After the Marmara earthquake: Lessons for avoiding short cuts to disasters," *Third World Quarterly* 21:3, June 2000: 425-439.
22. *Milliyet*, 19 August 1999.
23. For the most critical reports, see *The Guardian*, 28 August 1999; *Washington Post*, 27 August 1999; *Turkish Daily News*, 24 August 1999; and *Turkish Probe*, 22 August 1999.
24. Sedat Engin from *Hurriyet*, quoted in *Washington Post*, 29 August 1999.
25. Frederick Cuny, *Disasters and Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 13 and p. 101.
26. Quoted in *Washington Post*, 25 August 1999.
27. Yaprak Ozer, quoted in *Sivil Toplum Kuruluslari ve Yasalar-Etik-Deprem* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfi, 2000), p. 302.
28. Ayfer Tunc, Roundtable 'Deprem'in Sosyal ve Siyasal Etkileri,' *Cognito* no. 20, 1999, p. 179.
29. Akin Atauz, 'Deprem ve Sivil Toplum Orgutleri,' *Birikim*, no. 125/126, Sept./Oct. 1999: 89-94.
30. Interviews with Demet Gural, Executive Director of Human Resource Development Foundation, Ikbal Polat of Human Settlement Foundation, and Turkan Saylan, President of Association in Support of Modern Living, June-July 2000.
31. *Milliyet*, 25 June 2000, and interview with Memet Tanrisever, head of AKUT training division, July 2000.
32. *Turkish Daily News*, 29 August 1999.
33. Interviews with Ahmet Selamet, head of Mazlumder's Istanbul branch organization, Ibrahim Kalendar of Istanbul's *Fazilet* Party, and Hasan Ali Celik, head of Sakarya *Fazilet* Party, July 2000.
34. *Turkish Probe*, 5 December 1999, p. 2.
35. Interview with Hale Tinic, coordinator of Koc University's relief effort, July 2000.
36. Nasuh Mahruki in Roundtable, 'Toplum, Sivil Toplum Orgutlerini, Hosuna Giden Bir Filmi Seyreder Gibi Seyretti', *Cognito*, no. 20, 1999, pp. 261-262.
37. Yuksel Selek, in *Sivil Toplum*, p. 289.
38. Yilmaz Karkoyunlu in Roundtable 'Toplum...,' *Cognito*, no. 20, 1999, pp. 253-254.
39. Interview with Zafer Kirac of CCC, July 2000.
40. All surveys suffer from numerous methodological problems, including sampling and no *ex ante* baseline of attitudes of comparison. One survey, however, pointedly did find that only 20% of victims living in temporary housing have changed their political party orientation. See report from Istanbul University Faculty of Economics, "Economic and Social Aspect of 17 August Earthquake in Kocaeli and Sakarya Region, unpublished draft, 2000.
41. Interview with Omer Madra, President of Acik Radyo, July 2000.
42. The most well-known report is that of Tanor, *Perspectives on Democratisation*, 1997.
43. *Ayin Tarihi* (January-March 1998), pp. 144-145.
44. *Hurriyet*, 13 December 1997.
45. Muftuler-Bac, 2000, p. 163.
46. Udo Steinbach, 'The European Community, the United States, the Middle East, and Turkey,' in Heper and Evin, 1994, p. 109.
47. Muftuler-Bac, *Turkey's Relations with a Changing Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), and Paul Kubicek, 'Turkish-European Relations: At a New Crossroads?' *Middle East Policy*, Vol.6, no.4 (June 1999), pp. 157-173.

48. Adopted in 1993, this specifies that prospective EU members must be 1) democratic and respect human rights; 2) have basic macroeconomic stability and ability to deal with market competition; and 3) able to adopt the *acquis communautaire*, the body of EU law. In addition, Turkey was expected to make progress in relations with Greece, especially over Cyprus. The last topic, a foreign policy question, is largely beyond the scope of this paper.

49. Muftuler-Bac, 2000, Ali Karaosmanoglu, 'The Limits of International Influence for Democratization,' in Heper and Evin, 1994; and Ihsan Dagi, 'Democratic Transition in Turkey, 1980-1983: The Impact of European Diplomacy,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 32, no.2 (April 1996), pp. 124-141, and 'Human Rights, Democratization and the European Community in Turkish Politics: The Ozal Years, 1983-1987,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.37, no.1 (2001), forthcoming.

50. Karaosmanoglu, p. 127

51. Esmer, 1999, p. 42. In 1990 64% said they did not trust the EU; in 1997, the figure was 51%. Only 15% in 1997 expressed a high degree of trust in the EU.

52. By the terms of this treaty, only non-Muslims qualify as minorities. However, as one observer noted, the Treaty in Article 39 does allow for the use of any language by Turkish citizens. See Nicole Pope,

Turkey Update (www.turkeyupdate.com), 22 June 2000

53. For example, in September 1999, the military reacted very harshly to the suggestion of Sami Selcuk, head of the Appeals Court, that the constitution was illegitimate because it was adopted under military rule.

54. Ziya Onis, 'Luxembourg, Helsinki and Beyond: Towards an Interpretation of Recent Turkey-EU Relations,' *Government and Opposition*, Vol.35, no.4 (Autumn 2000), pp. 463-483, at 465.

55. *Turkish Daily News*, 20 July 2000.

56. *Turkey Update*, 22 June 2000 and 23 July 2000.

57. Marvine Howe, 'Turkey's Kurds Look Forward to Enhanced Cultural Rights as Turkey Moves Toward EU Membership,' *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, Vol. 19, no.5 (June 2000), p. 31.

58. *Turkey Update*, 14 November 2000.

59. *Turkey Update*, 22 June 2000.

60. *Reuters*, 6 September 2000.

61. *Turkey Update*, 22 June 2000.

62. Cuneyt Ulsever in *Turkish Daily News*, 18 July 2000.

63. Morton Abramowitz, ed. *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 2000), p. 5.

64. *Reuters*, 6 September 2000.

65. Thanks to William Hale for alerting to the author to this possible strategy.