



BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST: THE TRANSFORMATION OF TURKISH POLICY

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This article examines the drastic changes taking place in Turkey's domestic and foreign policy driven by prospects of EU membership. One of the most critical challenges for Turkish foreign policymakers will be how to handle problems coming out of the Middle East, especially regarding post-war Iraq. How Turkey responds to these challenges, as well as the policy Europe takes toward Turkey, will have a lasting impact on the nature of the republic itself.

Turkey's domestic as well as foreign policy is going through a massive transformation. This trend is primarily driven by the prospects of EU membership. But will Turkey be able to overcome a variety of problems, continue making reforms, and avoid a debilitating intervention in the Middle East?

As for Europe, Turkey's progress will depend on whether the EU will set a date for holding membership negotiations. That in turn depends on whether Turkey meets the conditions laid down at the Copenhagen summit of the European Council, which decided that accession negotiations with Turkey could start in 2005 if it were to meet certain criteria. If Turkey were to enter the EU, a thoroughly transformed Turkey might become an example to the Middle East for stability and a secular, modern, and democratic form of governance. This Turkey could also help the EU export security to the region and address the area's conflicts. The alternative to such an outcome could be an unstable Turkey, influenced by a combination of Islam and Turkish nationalism; alternatively, it could become an "illiberal democracy" dominated by the military and hard-liners.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN TURKEY'S POLICY AND POLITICS

The European Union (EU) is steadily expanding the boundaries of what Karl Deutsch had once called a "security community" or what Immanuel Kant would call a zone of "democratic peace." It has come to symbolize a geography characterized by stability, security, pluralist democracy, the rule of law and economic prosperity. This is also an area in which states define their relations within the bounds of rules, norms and habits that emphasize peaceful resolution of conflicts and a determination to find "win-win" solutions to issues.

In contrast, the area known as the Middle East, and its extension to the north through the former Soviet Union, is characterized by long conflicts. Several examples include Chechnya, Cyprus, Greece and Turkey, the Arab-Israeli Conflict, and the Armenian-Azeri conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh. That same region is generally characterized by poverty as well as either failed or repressive states reflecting, at best, what Fareed Zakaria called "illiberal democracy." Relations among states are characterized by deep mistrust, absence of cooperation, and periodic resort to violence. This situation is reinforced by the chaos in Iraq and growing terrorism

from Jihadist groups. The region typically resembles a "Hobbesian" world.

Turkey sits right on the fault line between Europe's "Kantian" world and the "Hobbesian" one of the Middle East. During the Cold War, Turkey had enjoyed relative stability and security. Its place in the "West" was, by and large, secure and uncontested. In this period Turkey remained aloof from developments in the Middle East and its foreign policy was typically characterized by non-involvement. Turkey shielded itself from the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as the effects of Pan-Arabism. Whatever involvement it had was limited to the economic realm, particularly from the mid-1970s onward. The end of the Cold War brought major changes and challenges to Turkey both internally and externally.

Internally, the Kurdish problem and the violence between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Turkish security forces undermined Turkish democracy. The mid-1990s also saw a major conflict between the secularist establishment in Turkey and a growing virulent political Islam. The role of the military increased as Kurdish and Islamist political parties were banned and supporters repressed. This occurred at a time when European democracies evolved and became increasingly pluralist and sensitive to human rights issues. As a result, Turkey was bitterly criticized. Increasingly, its "Western" credentials were contested. A turning point occurred at the Luxembourg European Council summit in 1997, when Turkey was not included among the new list of potential candidates for EU membership.

There was a forceful reaction from the establishment regarding this situation. A lively public debate developed about alternative future routes for Turkey. The alternatives ranged from efforts to revive the notion of Turkey leading a Turkic world, after the Central Asian republics gained independence from the Soviet

Union, to the idea of developing closer relations with the Islamic world. The former idea had been a favorite of the late Turgut Ozal while the latter one was dear to Necmettin Erbakan, then leader of the Islamist Refah Party.

Neither idea could counterbalance, however, the sheer reality of the fact that Turkey maintained almost 45 to 50 percent of its trade with the EU in the mid-1990s and this percentage steadily increased each year. Furthermore, Turkey seemed to have little to offer to the Turkic world, let alone to the Islamic world, particularly in terms of the financial resources needed.

In terms of the Middle East, the 1990s was a period when Turkey became steadily more involved in the region. The state establishment pursued a policy of expanding Turkey's relations with the United States as well as Israel. It supported the UN intervention in the 1990-91 Kuwait crisis. Turkey also made possible the creation of a safe haven for Kurds in northern Iraq, while deploying a military presence in the area to combat the PKK. Turkey supported the Arab-Israeli peace process and actively participated in the multilateral talks initiated with the Madrid conference in 1991. However, once the peace process stalled and entered a deadlock, Turkey's relations with Israel expanded.

Ironically, not only did the EU shun Turkey in 1997, but it was also treated similarly by the Islamic world as Iran and a number of Arab countries (led by Syria) tried to get the Islamic Conference Organization in Tehran to adopt a decision critical of Turkey's relations with Israel. Consequently, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel found himself having to leave the summit prematurely. In October 1998, Turkey threatened Syria with a military intervention in a successful effort to have Syria expel the PKK's leader, Abdullah Ocalan, who enjoyed sanctuary there.

Subsequently, 1999 became a turning point in EU-Turkish relations as well as Turkish domestic politics. In April, elections brought to power a relatively stable coalition government, led by veteran social democrat Bulent Ecevit, which was committed to democratic reforms. This coincided with the new Social Democratic government of Gerhard Schroder in Germany. In general the Social Democrats are more sympathetic to Turkey's EU aspirations compared to Christian Democrats, who traditionally portray Turkey as culturally unsuited for EU membership. In contrast, Social Democrats tend to advocate a Europe of shared values and norms rather than emphasize religion and cultural homogeneity. Thus, there is a place for Turkish membership, as long as Turkey meets the Copenhagen criteria. Indeed, from this perspective, Turkey's eventual EU membership is seen as an important test case for this conception of Europe.

The year 1999 was also important because Greek-Turkish relations went from their lowest to highest ebb in just a few months. They hit bottom when Ocalan was sheltered in the Greek Embassy in Kenya. But quickly thereafter the two countries entered an era of rapprochement after earthquakes in both countries that summer. In a major turnabout, Greece became an advocate of closer relations between Turkey and the EU--an amazing development considering Greece's traditional policy was exactly the opposite. In November, the Turkish government's decision to override domestic public opinion and respect the European Court of Human Rights' call for not executing Ocalan was seen in the EU as a sign of the government's commitment to reform. It was against this background that the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 extended candidate status to Turkey.

Since then, and particularly since the new Justice and Development Party

(*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi* or AKP) government came to power in November 2002, Turkey has covered significant ground in adopting reforms in order to meet the Copenhagen criteria. The Copenhagen European Council summit acknowledged these developments and adopted a decision to consider opening accession negotiations with Turkey in December 2004. There also appears to be a good chance that Turkey will meet the implementation test of the reforms, though there is a possibility that the lack of a solution to the Cyprus problem could stand in the way of Turkey receiving a date for starting negotiations.

Turkey has never before been this close to achieving its forty-year-old aspiration of joining the EU as a full member. This would also be the sealing of an almost two-century-long process of Westernization and effort to create a modern, secular and democratic society. Yet the chaos and instability created by the U.S. intervention in Iraq is deeply affecting Turkey. It put a lot of pressure on its foreign policy regarding whether or not to support the United States or intervene in northern Iraq. This is a very critical issue for Turkey's relations with the EU and the Middle East.

Equally, the terrorist attacks of 2003 in Istanbul also threw a shadow on whether Turkey would be able to sustain its political reforms and economic recovery that condition its march toward EU membership. Will Turkey get sucked into a quagmire in Iraq and the Middle East, or will it be able to stay out of any military involvement? Will Turkey be able to shield itself from al-Qa'ida-linked terrorism, handle its domestic economic problems, and continue making and implementing reforms? Will Turkey become a player in the region that can help to extend an EU-like "security community" into the Middle East, or will Turkey engage in policies that might aggravate the Hobbesian nature of Middle Eastern politics?

U.S. INTERVENTION IN IRAQ AND TURKISH RESPONSES

The decision by the U.S.-led coalition to intervene in Iraq in March 2003 without a clear mandate from the UN strained the cohesion of NATO and once more demonstrated the challenges the EU faces in developing a common foreign and security policy. The case of Turkey in particular is unique.

Turkey has been a long-standing ally of the United States. The decision of the Turkish parliament, on March 1, 2003, not to support the government's recommendation to allow U.S. troops to enter northern Iraq via Turkish territory brought the relationship with the United States to its lowest ebb since the U.S. arms embargo against Turkey in 1975. The situation was further aggravated in April, and again in July, when U.S. troops arrested small Turkish military units in northern Iraq. Following the arrests in July, local U.S. officials alleged that the unit was plotting to assassinate the local Kurdish governor. Although the crisis was diffused, Turkish mistrust of the United States deepened, and the incident itself was seen as a manifestation of U.S. disillusionment with Turkey.

Nevertheless, the United States continued to exert pressure on Turkey to send troops to Iraq to help stabilize a steadily deteriorating situation. In October 2003, the Turkish parliament--despite continued widespread public disapproval--did authorize the government to send troops to Iraq if it chose to do so. However, this time, opposition from the Iraqi Governing Council, and especially Kurds in northern Iraq, to any presence of Turkish troops forced the U.S. government to change its mind. Subsequently, the Turkish government in November announced that it was suspending its decision to send troops. Two weeks later, bombs exploded in front of two Istanbul synagogues followed by two more bombs five days

later, both inflicting heavy casualties and damage in Istanbul. Al-Qa'ida claimed responsibility and accused Turkey of having collaborated with its enemy.

These developments occurred at a time when Turkey was continuing to adopt a series of major reforms to meet the Copenhagen criteria. Paradoxically, the Turkish parliament's decision to refuse to support the U.S.-led coalition was viewed as a manifestation of greater democracy in Turkey and a weakening of the pro-U.S. military's power. The conspicuous, and at times forceful, U.S. support for Turkish membership in the EU had led some there to argue that a Turkey much influenced by the United States would become an American "Trojan horse" in the EU. The crisis thus helped erode the argument among Turkish Euro-skeptics--a loose affiliation of right- and left-wing politicians, and an important part of the security establishment and military--that Turkey's strategic importance would always ensure U.S. support. This assumed American support had led this group to argue that Turkey could achieve EU membership without stringently implementing some of the more sensitive reforms needed to meet the Copenhagen criteria.

Another important development with respect to Turkey's handling of the Iraq crisis was the way in which it refrained, partly due to EU opposition, from any unilateral intervention in northern Iraq. The Turkish security establishment, including the military, watches developments in Iraq with concern, fearing that any undermining of Iraq's territorial integrity might produce a Kurdish state. Such a development could then lead to irredentist claims on the Kurdish-populated sectors of Turkey, or alternatively, could encourage some among Turkey's Kurds to become more insistent in their demands for independence. Turkey's security establishment also worries about the continued presence of PKK militants in

northern Iraq--a presence they fear would become more entrenched should an independent Kurdish state be created in Iraq. The announcement that the PKK would end a self-proclaimed ceasefire increased these concerns at a time when the government, with U.S. nudging, had adopted in July 2002 a partial amnesty for PKK militants wishing to return to Turkey.

The Turkish military preferred to receive U.S. cooperation in dismantling the PKK and the fact that this did not happen became another source of tension both between the United States and Turkey as well as between the Turkish security establishment and the government. Nevertheless, the government succeeded in warding off pressures for military involvement in northern Iraq that would have certainly aggravated Turkey's relations with the EU, Iraq's Governing Council, and most probably the Arab world as well. Coincidentally, this policy also lent credibility to those EU-approved internal reforms aiming to curb the influence of the military over the civilian government.

The terrorist bombings became another challenge to the government's program of reforms and efforts to get accession negotiations started with the EU. They took place just as its economy was showing strong signs of recovery. The inflation rate was falling to its lowest level since 1977. Interest rates were also declining while industrial output was growing. These developments had been accompanied by a relatively favorable progress report by the European Commission in November, boosting the country's sense of confidence.

The bombings to some extent threw all this into question especially to both Turkish and European opponents of its EU membership. The security establishment argued reforms had weakened the ability to fight terrorism. There were also European claims that Turkish membership would open the EU

to terrorism. In contrast, though, there were statements that the bombings showed the need to support membership precisely to show the world that the EU was able to incorporate a democratic, secular, and modern Muslim country.

DYNAMICS OF DECISION MAKING

A constellation of factors played a critical role in Turkey's initial decision not to permit the transit of U.S. troops to Iraq. Public opinion was strongly opposed to it and manifested this sentiment in an uncharacteristically forceful way. A number of large public demonstrations were held including one in front of the parliament the day before the vote. An underlying factor here was that Turkish education and socialization emphasizes national independence, non-intervention in other country's affairs, and deep suspicion of the "West" in general and the United States in particular. The "West" and the United States are portrayed as imperialist powers driven by their own interest.

Hence, U.S. intentions in Iraq were seen as purely the result of a desire to control oil production rather than humanitarian, idealistic considerations of wanting to end brutal repression, promote democratization, and dismantle weapons of mass destruction. Public opinion was also adversely affected by the perception that Turkey was being portrayed in the United States as a greedy country merely trying to profit from the situation. For his part, the speaker of parliament did not hide his view that this was an operation directed against a Muslim people.

The Turkish president was not supportive either. Coming from a legal background, he argued that the constitution required a UN or multilateral authorization for Turkey to be able to support the U.S. intervention. The government itself was caught between the unpopularity of the idea and the fact that Turkey continued to need U.S. support--

both in terms of EU membership, but even more importantly, to gain the additional funding needed to escape its economic recession.

While the ruling AKP had gained close to a two-thirds parliamentary majority in the November 2002 elections, it is like a coalition of three smaller parties: one representing protest votes to punish the former government, a second associated with the party leadership's moderate view of Islam (a sort of Christian Democrat version of Islam), and a third with a more ambitious and conservative Islamic agenda. This also weakened the government's ability to push hard in support of the intervention.

The military conducted very detailed and complex negotiations with its U.S. counterparts in January and February 2003. In these talks, it insisted that Turkey be able to deploy troops in northern Iraq. The military and security elite saw a major threat to national security from the possible emergence of an independent Kurdish state as well as the presence of armed PKK militants in northern Iraq who might become active again. The U.S. refusal to permit a Turkish military presence played a critical role in the military's decision to remain silent on backing U.S. troop movements through Turkey. The absence of a clear recommendation from the National Security Council meeting just before the decisive parliamentary session was a critical factor in the government's failure to mobilize the necessary votes to win on the issue.

Nevertheless, parliament's decision came as a shock for the government, which had expected success. It hoped that the financial arrangements associated with the deal would help revive the economy. The decision also shocked the U.S. government and military, which were also confident that in the end Turkey would act in a way befitting a long-standing ally. Indeed, the United States had already begun preparing for

the troop deployment on the basis of a previous Turkish government decision. This aggravated the disappointment. The irony, of course, was that this decision was the result of the workings of a democratic process which the United States had long urged on Turkey. In general, the U.S. government accepted the decision and tried to limit any damage to bilateral relations as well as to its own war effort.

By the summer of 2003, the inability to restore order and stability in Iraq well after the end of formal hostilities led to increasing calls in the United States for Turkish assistance. This time the U.S. government appeared to handle the issue more carefully in terms of Turkish sensibilities and also authorized the potential release of \$8.5 billion in credits without openly linking it to Turkish troop deployments in Iraq. The military and the government wanted to make this deal but public opinion continued to oppose any involvement in Iraq, fearing Turkey would be seen as helping to entrench a U.S. occupation. In an effort to legitimize Turkish involvement in the eyes of the public, both the government and the military stressed that Turkey's role would be a humanitarian one emphasizing the restoration of public services. A frequently employed expression was about trying, "to put out the fire in the neighbor's house."

Yet, clearly the security elite's immediate concern was the repercussions that chaos and instability in Iraq could have on Turkey. They feared the break up of Iraq and the emergence of a Kurdish state. They argued that sending troops would block these outcomes while guaranteeing Turkey a place at the negotiating table where Iraq's future would be discussed.

These officials were particularly disturbed by the prominent Kurdish presence in the U.S.-appointed Governing Council in Baghdad at the expense of the Turcoman presence, which they

attributed to the Kurds choosing to cooperate closely with the United States. There was also deep concern about the fact that the PKK had again started operations in towns along the border with Iraq and threatened further attacks deeper into Turkey. The security elite scrutinized every American move and statement concerning northern Iraq and concluded--contrary to U.S. government statements--that the United States was conspiring to set up a Kurdish state. Hence, a military presence in Iraq was required to counter this danger.

Another important factor influencing the decision to send troops to Iraq is far less evident. The government has been very successful in adopting a series of very difficult reforms in an effort to enhance Turkey's chances of starting accession negotiations with the EU. These reforms substantially improve and pluralize Turkish democracy. Most importantly, the government succeeded in limiting the power of the National Security Council, and thus of the military and the security establishment. Since this group is more eager to intervene in Iraq, the government thought that dispatching troops would curry favor with a domestic constituency its other policies have injured.

Another contributing factor was the government's doubts about whether its reforms would be rewarded by the EU with a date for starting negotiations. Thus, it wanted to shore up its relationship with the United States so that it did not lose that country's support or end up isolated in the region. On the other hand, those circles in Turkey that have long opposed EU membership, and the reforms associated with it, saw Turkey's involvement in Iraq as a chance to reassert their influence and agenda. The deteriorating security situation in Iraq and PKK attacks against security forces in southeastern Turkey strengthened their hands. Ironically, these attacks took place just at a time when the

government's reforms to meet the EU Copenhagen criteria were supposed to bring about a gradual improvement in the cultural lives of Kurds. The implication is that Kurdish hardline militants feared that if many Kurdish grievances were addressed, it would be much harder for them to mobilize support. Hardliners on both sides, Turkish and Kurdish, once more appeared to share an interest in having the reforms fail.

Finally, unlike the situation when the war began, the EU now seemed much less vocal in opposing Turkish involvement in Iraq. There was a growing concern about the consequences of instability and chaos in Iraq accompanied with an effort to find a UN decision that would permit cooperation. These developments would make a Turkish decision to provide troops for Iraq much less controversial and threatening to Europe.

Thus, the Turkish parliament on October 8, 2003 voted 358-183 to authorize the government to send troops to Iraq. This time the ruling party voted almost unanimously for the resolution, though the opposition Republican People's Party opposed it. The decision, however, was instantly met with opposition both in Turkey and Iraq. The Governing Council (and particularly its Kurdish members) made it clear that Turkish troops were unwelcome. There were also hints that Turkish troops might meet with violence in northern Iraq.

There was also opposition within Turkey, which was not just limited to the general public. The president continued his opposition on legal grounds while a prominent member of the ruling party and president of the Foreign Relations Committee, Mehmet Dulger, remarked, "no mother in Turkey would accept their sons dying in place of American GIs." Both the Arab and European media carried articles opposing Turkish military involvement on the grounds that it would aggravate the situation. Even the highest

U.S. official in Iraq, Paul Bremer, reasoned that Turkey was a former colonial power in Iraq and that it was natural there was domestic resistance. His decision to oppose Turkish troop deployments embarrassed the U.S. government. In the end, Secretary of State Colin Powell called his counterpart Abdullah Gul to ask that Turkish troops not be deployed for the time being.

Although this led to resentment in Turkey and criticism from Gul, it was also a relief for the government and a "win-win" situation for it. First, it had helped repair the damage with the United States, since now Turkey had offered to help in Iraq. Second, it had pleased the military and security establishment by seeing through the parliament a policy they had advocated. Third, by not having to send troops it avoided antagonizing public opinion. Fourth, the outcome let it avoid a situation that could have led to friction with the EU and Middle Eastern countries. Finally, it avoided a potential armed confrontation with the Kurds in northern Iraq.

GEOPOLITICS OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

During the Cold War, Turkey had a relatively cozy security arrangement. It was an important part of NATO and was closely integrated with the major political and economic institutions of Western Europe. Turkey also had an associational relationship with the then European Community.

However, the end of the Cold War changed this situation dramatically. The Balkans drifted into chaos while in Turkey a Kurdish secessionist struggle led by the PKK adversely affected both internal security and Turkish democracy. The situation was aggravated by the aftermath of the first Gulf War, which left a vacuum in northern Iraq from where the PKK was able to mount operations into Turkey. Economic sanctions against Iraq also led to the loss of business in that

country, which used to be a major source of income for the economy of southeast Turkey--an area heavily populated by Kurds.

The situation was further complicated by the covert or overt assistance that neighboring and even EU governments offered to the PKK. This was a period when Turkey came to the brink of war with Greece in 1996 and Syria in 1998. Relations were foul and confrontational with Iran. Turkey's close and intimate relations with Israel provoked considerable resentment in the Arab world; so much so that the then Turkish president found himself storming out of an Islamic Conference Organization summit in Tehran in November 1997. Relations with a number of EU countries were often strained over human rights violations and the Kurdish problem.

The country was gripped by a deep sense of mistrust towards the external world and particularly the EU and the United States. Many in the country, including the military and bureaucratic elite, believed that the United States was actually supporting the PKK. Internationally, Turkey was often seen as a security liability. The exception was Turkey's restrained policy in respect to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Against tremendous public opinion for a unilateral intervention of some kind to save the Muslims from Serbian massacres, the government was able to adhere to a multilateral approach and contributed positively to the process that culminated with the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995.

This situation began to change by the late 1990s. The beginning of the process of rapprochement between Greece and Turkey in 1999, followed by the Helsinki European Council decision to extend to Turkey candidate status, were critical developments edging Turkey closer to the EU and toward political reforms. The U.S. role in helping Turkish officials to capture the leader of the PKK in Kenya

followed by the visit of the U.S. President to Turkey for the OSCE summit in November 1999 were two events that boosted the standing of the United States in Turkey.

This period also coincided with Turkey's active involvement in NATO operations against Serbia over Kosovo as well as in humanitarian and peacekeeping operations in Kosovo. In the United States, Turkey was presented as a pivotal state in terms of the security of the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Close cooperation between the United States and Turkey was also extended to the strategically important issue of the transportation of oil and gas from the Caspian Sea region through Turkey to the West.

The events of September 11, 2001 further enhanced the security value of Turkey as a Muslim country that could be a model liberal market economy and secular democracy to an Islamic world beset by Islamic radicalism, repression and economic failure. Moreover, Turkey contributed to the force stabilizing Afghanistan after the Taliban was defeated. In short, Turkey had become a net contributor or exporter of hard and soft security.

However, this period too was not without its difficulties. A coalition government in Turkey lacked the cohesion and determination to see through political reforms needed to meet the EU's Copenhagen criteria. Powerful opponents to membership in the EU still remained in spite of wide popular support. Yet the United States remained adamant in its support for Turkey's EU membership and tried to exert considerable pressure on a number of EU governments.

This situation strengthened the hand of those who resisted political reforms on the grounds that Turkey's strategic importance should mean an abandonment of political conditions for membership. In turn, EU circles demanded Turkey meet

the criteria which they said were equivalent to those that other candidate states must fulfill. There was increased friction for a time as Turkey opposed the European effort to create an alternative security force—from which it would be excluded as a non-EU member—by denying the EU access to NATO capabilities unless Turkey enjoyed a say in the new group. These developments provoked resentment among those in the EU who had more differences with the United States. This was the context in which Turkey was portrayed as a potential American "Trojan horse."

The outcome of the December 2002 European Council meeting was mixed. The new Turkish government led by AKP came forward with a powerful commitment to reforms as well as a desire to resolve the conflict over Cyprus and further deepen the rapprochement between Greece and Turkey. There were great expectations in government circles that a date for starting accession negotiations might be set. The United States as well as a number of EU governments lobbied hard in support for such an outcome. Important parts of the European media for once seemed supportive as well.

However, Denmark, which then held the EU presidency, together with France and Germany, balked. The outcome was a compromise arrangement that introduced the prospects of negotiations starting in 2005 if Turkey completed its reforms. This left the new government in a weak position at a time when pressure for supporting a U.S. intervention in Iraq was mounting and negotiations to resolve the Cyprus problem were reaching a key stage. The government hesitated on both issues. Yet, the government also pursued reforms and continued to take Turkey through a process of major transformation.

Transformation has not been limited to domestic politics. A similar process of fundamental change can be observed in

respect to foreign policy, too. The manner in which the Iraqi crisis was handled by the government is in itself a reflection of this process. The government managed to stay out of Iraq and shied away from using "Hobbesian" or confrontational means of foreign policy in contrast to the Turkish policy of a few years back.

A good example of Turkish foreign policy evolving towards a more "Kantian" or "Europeanized" approach to foreign policy is the manner in which the crisis of Turkey's veto over the use of NATO capabilities for European security force operations was finally resolved in November 2001. Turkey had been vehemently objecting to the EU countries using NATO capabilities without allowing Turkey the right to fully participate in ESDP decision-making. After long and tough negotiations between Turkey, the United States and Britain, a compromise arrangement was reached. The arrangement reflected a "win-win" outcome that made it possible for EU countries to gain access to NATO facilities while Turkey's security concerns were addressed without undermining the European security force's independent decision-making procedures. Furthermore, this also opened the way at the Laeken European Council meeting for Turkey to be invited to participate in the Convention on the Future of Europe. The decision not to become directly involved in Iraq can also partly be attributed to a greater willingness, as compared to the past, to heed to objections coming from the external world--be they objections from the EU, Iraq, or other Middle Eastern countries.

Part of this transformation is also reflected in the erosion of the influence that traditional central players in foreign policymaking, such as the military and civilian hardliners, have enjoyed. Elected officials are today more likely to have their views and interests taken into consideration than was the case in the

past. Furthermore, public opinion and civil society have been able to make their voice heard on foreign policy issues and exercise some degree of influence.

More interestingly, the government made the issue of democratization a foreign policy objective. Abdullah Gul, the minister of foreign affairs, in his address to the Islamic Conference Organization summit in Tehran in May 2003 stressed the need for Muslim countries to democratize and pay greater attention to human and women's rights. This may well be the first occasion where Turkey has seriously and credibly attempted to live up to the frequent calls to become a model for other Muslim countries. The fact that this foreign minister came from a political party that had Islamist roots and that it happened in Tehran--where only a few years ago Turkey had been shunned--makes this transformation even more significant.

The ability of the present government to address the consequences of the two terrorist attacks in Istanbul decisively, making no distinction between its Jewish or Muslim citizens that had fallen victim to the bombings, reinforced its image as an advocate of liberal democracy in a secular state. The current leadership's Islamist background has actually lent greater legitimacy to their severe and unrelenting criticism of terrorism perpetrated by Islamic fundamentalist groups. This appears to have increased the credibility and the relevance of Turkey's political system as a model or example for other Muslim countries that seem vulnerable to falling under the grip of Islamic extremism.

The transformation in Turkish foreign policy is also reflected in its policies toward the Middle East. Previously, Turkey's military relations with Israel had attracted negative attention while Turkey had poor relations with the Arab countries, particularly Syria. In sharp contrast, today Turkey has good relations with both Israel and many Arab countries

including Syria. The issue of water and the question of Alexandretta (Hatay) are no longer highly contested or divisive issues straining relations between Syria and Turkey. Inter-governmental relations have reached a level where both countries were recently able to agree to clear an area the size of the island of Cyprus from mines that had been put into place back in the 1950s when relations had first started to deteriorate.

The current AKP government has conspicuously tried to keep good relations with Israel, though at the same time without hesitating to criticize both Israeli policies toward Palestinians and the Palestinians' use of suicide bombings. This, of course, is also in stark contrast with the coalition government led by the Refah Party's Necmettin Erbakan in 1996-97. At the time, Erbakan had stirred considerable controversy within the country when he advocated closer relations with Iran and Syria, while trying to undermine evolving Turkish-Israeli relations. He was repudiated for his anti-Semitic statements and anti-EU opinions while advocating the establishment of an Islamic Common Market led by Turkey. These views and policies played an important role in the military's pressure in February 1997, which led to the downfall of his coalition government.

The future of Iraq will continue to be a critical issue for Turkey. As already mentioned, the military and the hardliners in Turkey are particularly concerned about Iraq disintegrating into three separate states. They do not trust the United States and suspect it intends to create a separate Kurdish state. These decisionmakers are already feeling quite nervous about the U.S. reluctance to clamp down on the PKK in northern Iraq. Due to the serious potential repercussions for Turkey in this matter (discussed above), the debate and politics surrounding the future of Iraq are going to be closely followed in Turkey.

It is very likely that the military and the hardliners will object to any arrangement that may seem to reduce Iraq's territorial integrity--even a federal one, especially if it is based on ethnicity. On the other hand, the government itself may actually be less dogmatic on the issue, especially if federalism does emerge as a genuinely supported option within Iraq and the region. In any event, the future territorial and political shape of Iraq will be an issue to which Turkish foreign policy players will pay considerable attention.

Beyond the internal territorial arrangement for Iraq, Turkey's interest is to see a genuinely democratic and secular Iraq. However, in Turkey there is considerable skepticism and apprehension about the likelihood of such a regime emerging. Such an Iraq would also be a country less likely to pose any political or military threat to Turkey. In contrast, an unstable Iraq, or one heavily influenced by Iran, would constitute such a threat.

Turkey's stand on the Iraqi crisis and its adoption of political reforms has helped to strengthen its relations with the EU. However, until recently, the Cyprus problem continued to stand in the way. Statements from EU officials and European politicians made it clear that the absence of a solution on Cyprus could well impede Turkey from getting a date for the start of accession negotiations, even if Turkey met the Copenhagen political criteria.

In the debate which has taken place amongst both Turkish Cypriots and Turks as to how to proceed and how much flexibility to offer, the Turkish government originally worked under the supposition that whatever its preferences, any compromise on Cyprus unaccompanied by dramatic progress on EU membership would be political suicide. While many thought this fear could create a vicious circle in which Turkey's Cyprus policy and the EU's

Turkish policy mutually reinforced each other to a standstill, in the end it appears that the opposite has occurred, as EU prodding produced nothing less than a revolutionary change in Turkey's policy on Cyprus.

For decades powerful circles in Ankara--as well as Rauf Dentas, the president of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)--had advocated the continuation of status quo, in other words the presence of two separate "states" on the island. This policy had for the most part left Turkey isolated in the international community. Turkey had long been under pressure to negotiate a settlement for the reunification of the island. At the Helsinki European Council summit in December 1999, Turkey was granted candidate status for EU membership with the understanding that Turkey would have to meet the Copenhagen political criteria and settle the Cyprus problem to be able to start membership negotiations. In November 2001, the secretary general of the UN, Kofi Annan, launched an elaborate plan for the reunification of the island. During the course of 2002, negotiations took place between the two parties. However, in March 2003, these talks collapsed when it finally became clear that Denktas would not accept a settlement on the basis of the Annan Plan. This opened the way for the Greek-Cypriot side to enter the European Union (EU) by May 1, 2004 representing Cyprus.

National elections in TRNC in December 2003 brought in a parliament with a slight majority in support of the settlement of the Cyprus problem and membership to the EU. This gave the current Turkish government the possibility to edge the supporters of the status quo in Ankara closer to the idea of seeking a solution on the basis of the Annan Plan. This was also accompanied by tremendous pressure from the EU, which suggested that the likelihood of Turkey (which now appeared set to meet

the Copenhagen political criteria) receiving a date for membership negotiations would be much greater if the Cyprus problem could be settled before May 2004. The government in January 2004 succeeded to receive the blessing of the National Security Council and subsequently launched an international campaign to have negotiations on the basis of the Annan Plan started. The negotiations under the auspices of Kofi Annan started on February 19 and the general expectation is that a solution will be reached and submitted to a referendum on both sides of the island in April. A string of EU officials and representatives of influential EU member governments have streamed into Ankara signaling that if Turkey continued to support the reunification of Cyprus, Turkey will receive a date for the beginning of accession talks.

CONCLUSION

The implication of the solution of the Cyprus problem and Turkey finally embarking on a path of EU membership is significant in terms of the future of the Middle East. At a time when there is growing urgency to bring stability and democracy to the Muslim world and the Middle East, a Muslim country like Turkey with strong prospects of EU membership will be capable of playing a much more constructive role in the region. Such a Turkey is going to be much more likely to make positive contributions to the efforts to rebuild Iraq. Similarly, a stable Turkey will also be able to play an important economic role in the region, especially as the current Turkish government's political background relates much more easily to the publics and governments of the Middle East. They have already, on a number of occasions, been able to directly advocate democratization, the rule of law, and women rights in the Muslim world that no previous government in Turkey could have done.

Lastly, a Turkey that is anchored with the EU and that is capable of mobilization the long years of cooperation with Israelis and Palestinians may be able to contribute to efforts to breakout of the deadlock between the two parties.

Turkish foreign policy has reached a crossroads. Turkey is carrying out democratizing and economic reforms to meet the criteria for EU membership. The outcome of such events as the Iraq crisis and its management of terrorist attacks contribute to that end. The EU needs Turkey if it aspires to play a wider role in international politics. Turkey's relations with the Middle East are also likely to get better if it enters the EU, while such a situation would also enhance the attraction of Turkey's democracy, secular system of government, free market economy, and tolerant form of Islam as a model for that troubled region.

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Versions of this article were previously presented as "Turkey Between the Middle East and Europe: Assessing the Impact of the Aftermath of the U.S. Intervention in Iraq on Turkey and Turkish Foreign Policy," a draft paper prepared for presentation at IFRI, Paris, December 12, 2003; and "The West and Its Institutions: Losing Allies but Gaining Converts – the Case of Turkey," a paper presented at the conference on Geopolitical Change, the Use of Force, and New Strategic Doctrines, September 12-14, 2004, Lansdowne Resort, Leesburg, Virginia.