ALTERNATIVES
Turkish Journal Of International Relations
Volume 4 Number 3 Fall 2005

WHICH SIDE OF THE FENCE? TURKEY'S UNCERTAIN PLACE IN THE EU

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The 'civilisational argument' regarding why Turkey wants to join the EU is dismissed by many Western scholars as trite. And yet they could not be more wrong.

This paper is premised on the *axiom* that the main reason why Turkey wants to join the EU is its desire to be accepted as an equal by the Western civilisation complex. Looking at the EU's essentialist language, on the one hand, and the Copenhagen 'objective' criteria on the other, I will assess 'what it takes' for Turkey to join. I will look at how Turkey is faring against the list of reforms expected of it and at why the EU is still deliberating Turkey's candidacy: have they changed their mind or is elective affinity part of the equation?

The answer to this question is vital for Turkey on two levels. On the one hand, if you want to be wanted then subjective criteria matter more than objective ones. On the other hand, however, for Turkey to finally make the transition necessary, legal and institutional reforms have to be coupled with a fundamental normative transformation that may affect the core of the very ideological position that sought Western acceptance

in the first place. Until the EU makes it clear that Turkey's candidacy will depend on objective criteria alone, Turkey cannot take the next and final step in its reform process, which entails a normative transformation of the driving values of Turkey's political system.

As this is a state-led process, I will mainly look at government statements and official sources. Although the civil society movement in Turkey is lively and largely committed to the EU effort, it is the government that spearheads the process and hence I will focus analytically on government initiatives.

Does Turkey Really Want to Be Wanted?

It would be naïve to suggest that Turkey only wants to join the EU for the 'membership card'. And yet it is a central concern. Preambulatory Paragraph 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey reads:

> 'The determination to safeguard the everlasting existence, prosperity and material and spiritual well-being of the Republic of Turkey, and to attain the standards of contemporary civilization as an honourable member with equal rights of the family of world nations;'

This is Atatürk's legacy and, although, in the 1920s and 30s that Western vision did not have an institutional instantiation, Turkish policy makers have always been quick in seeking membership of institutions, such as NATO, that are perceived as expressing this civilisation. EU membership is sought in this vein.

The EU represents for Turkey 'a project of vision and civilisation', noted former Prime Minister Tansu Çiller[1]. '[T]he EU means understanding', stated former foreign minister İsmail Cem[2]. More recently, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that EU

membership is the natural outcome of Turkey's ideal to reach the level of contemporary civilisation[3].

If such statements have an outdated ring to them, it is because they are several decades old. For Turkey's politicians are still quoting the vision of the Republic's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who decreed, in the aftermath of the Balkan and First World Wars, that the only way for Turkey to avoid being victimised in the future was to be strong and powerful. To do that, it needed progress. Cultural peculiarities aside, progress to the Kemalists meant achieving the standards of contemporary civilisation as exemplified by the West, see Gökalp (1959). That said, Atatürk's motto was 'with the West, despite the West'. He believed in Western civilisational achievements and progress but had no illusions that begging assistance would get Turkey anywhere. The Allies, Atatürk (2003:78) noted '[do] not want, even in the future, that Turkey remains united, modernised and enjoys a real independence.' So Turkey was to Westernise without Western assistance and independence was to be valued more than anything. The West was a model but not a partner in the 20s.

Partnerships were sought and developed later. Although in the 1920s Atatürk preached Westernisation despite the West, ultimately acceptance by the West would be the final confirmation of Turkey's modernisation success. That explains the mixed attitude most Turks display vis-à-vis EU membership: on the one hand it is desired as the ultimate organisational manifestation of Atatürk's 'contemporary civilisation' and on the other hand it is mistrusted as a latter-day Sèvres treaty, seeking to weaken and change the Turkish state according to its own values and principles.

To suggest an attachment to an 80-year old ideology does not intend to suggest a certain political naïveté amongst Turkish voters and decision-makers. Far from it. This is not a

case of romantic attachment to a long-gone golden age. The resonance Kemalism still has in Turkey has a practical explanation: it worked. The modernisation drive Atatürk initiated was powerful and very successful, especially if Turkey is compared to countries with a similar level of development in the 1920s. Although Atatürk spurred his country Westward 'despite the West', it is only natural that Turkey would pine for recognition. The Economist, in a survey on Turkey's European dream[4], noted off-handedly that many Turks take a 'sick pride' in reminding European audiences that the Ottoman Empire had been the 'sick man of Europe': they may have been sick but they are European. The statement is true and yet its source is not pride, it is thirst for recognition.

Practical benefits notwithstanding, for many in Turkey EU membership will, above all, convey acknowledgment that Turkey does indeed belong with Europe having achieved the civilisational standards it has been pursuing for so long. EU accession, notes finance minister and chief EU negotiator[5] Ali Babacan (2004:12), represents the final stage of almost two centuries of Turkey's modernisation efforts. Finance minister Abdullah Gül (2005) also notes that 'Turkey is coming ever closer to its historical integration with the West'. Gül draws attention to Turkey's NATO commitments as well as its membership of the Council of Europe and other such international and trans-national organisations that Turkey joined over the years in the name of its Western orientation. This is not the passing whim of one administration: it is a value embedded in the political system; it is an imperative towards which the state apparatus has always strived; and it is a commitment that is expected of all politicians battling for office.

In those terms, the EU is particularly significant as, unlike NATO, it is a self-perceived community of values, not simply interests. Whether Turkey *can* embrace these values

and be 'of' Europe, we will turn to in a moment. First we need to assess how a community of values can be bounded in space in a contiguous manner.

EU Values, European Community Attitudes

Although the EU does not *need* contiguous territory – in EU maps, Greece is still free-floating, its northern neighbours remaining outside the Union – it has a spatial element to it: it is territorially finite, as the name suggests, although it is not clear exactly where Europe ends. And hence it can have 'neighbours', countries that are next to it but outside it. But what is the EU, with its normatively bounded political space: a restricted-access 'compound' or a long-in-the-making 'family home'? In the former, those who meet the membership criteria get admitted, in the latter, essentialism wins the day.

On http://www.eu.int/abc/index_en.htm the European Union describes itself as a 'family' of states. Even if the word is used figuratively, it does draw attention to the fact that, ultimately, affinity has a role to play. Hence when Morocco applied to join the Union it was rejected flat-out. It did not belong in the family although it remained a neighbour. The case of Turkey is more complicated. Like a very distant cousin, Turkey poses for Europeans the question: 'How many degrees of separation actually annul kinship?' Turkey puts questions of European identity and geographical boundaries in sharper focus[6]. So many countries are easy to classify as 'family', 'neighbours' or none of the above. Turkey is not such an easy case. Of course this has very little to do with Turkey as such. It simply happens to fall in the grey areas of the debate on European identity, a debate that remains as yet unresolved in Europe.

Grillo, Milio and Talani (2005:4), for example, find that enlargement was central in the 'no' vote in Holland and France. In both cases the vote was justified in terms of preserving social openness and secularism by closing the borders to those who might

harm said openness. As Islam is on the spotlight at the moment, shrouded in suspicion regarding its links to anything from global terrorism to the subjection of women and the suppression of artistic freedom, the faith of Turkey's population seems to acquire more significance in the eyes of many Europeans than its secular state structure.

This may be why Turks, although in favour of membership, do not have high hopes for its achievement, for they can see Europe remains profoundly divided and for its accession to be accepted such divisions must be bridged or overcome. How much longer can Turkey be kept waiting? Reform fatigue is already setting in while the process is not over yet and general disillusionment is growing for, as Baker[7] notes, Turkey has met European demands more than halfway but no rewards seem forthcoming.

No other country has ever found itself in this position before. Countries have been rejected or faced qualified opposition; but Turkey's European saga is unparalleled both in terms of its extraordinary length and in terms of the passions it inspires. Some oppose any further enlargement for the sake of the Union. Some specifically oppose Turkey on the grounds of geography or culture. Something about Turkey seems to a lot of Europeans to be 'ill-fitting' but, whatever it might be, it has nothing to do with existing criteria for membership. Hence it is difficult to explain what leaves so many Europeans on the verge of lapsing into rants that smack, to the same Europeans, of intolerance. So EU decision-makers draft documents with get-out-of-gaol-free cards built into them, just in case.

The October 2004 Communication from the Commission to the Council and the Parliament, after commending Turkey on its reform efforts, stressed that Turkey, if successful, should expect a long transition period as well as the possibility of

'permanent safeguards' being put in place 'to protect EU labour market'. Effectively, Turkey is warned that its membership might be 'slimmed down', deprived of the most significant benefits of belonging to the Union, namely freedom of movement for all EU citizens within the Union. Similarly, in the European Council Presidency Conclusions of 16/17 December 2004, while Turkey's decisive progress in its far-reaching reform process is welcomed and confidence in the sustainability of the reforms expressed, 'permanent safeguards' are mentioned. Does that mean that Turkey might be allowed into the European compound – i.e. it will be more than a neighbour – but not quite into the family home?

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)[8] is a new EU initiative. The idea is to invite the EU's 'neighbours' to the east and south 'to share in the peace, stability and prosperity that we enjoy in the European Union'. The policy 'aims to create a ring of friends around the borders of the new enlarged EU.' The core assumption of this initiative is that '[w] e share a past and many common interests with our southern and eastern neighbours, from trade to cultural exchanges, from migration issues to environmental cooperation. Across the Mediterranean, the ENP will reinforce and build on the cooperation that we have developed over nearly ten years […]. For our neighbours in the east, the European Neighbourhood Policy shows that we are moving towards a new and closer relationship, so as to avoid the emergence of new dividing lines on our continent'.

The partners in this policy[9] include countries that are on the edges of 'our continent' as well as countries that are resolutely 'next to' Europe but not part of it. Turkey, as a candidate country, is naturally not listed as a partner here and yet its status remains

unclear. If its membership is qualified and, for all intents and purposes, 'not fully full' where does it fit into the EU's essentialist family-neighbourhood continuum?

Angela Merkel's suggestion for a privileged partnership might be the most concrete and honest answer offered yet. She acknowledges that Turkey is more than a neighbour but believes that it is less than family. Angela Merkel, leader of the German Christian Democratic Union, has long maintained an anti-Turkey stance. If she were to replace Gerhard Schröder in power, the fact that Germany's Turkish population is just shy of three million might soften her position. For the time being, however, she maintains that Turkey ought to be offered 'special associate status' rather than membership. Both Erdoğan and Schröder oppose this suggestion while an enraged Deniz Baykal, stated: *'özel statü' kabul edilemez*[10], (we cannot accept a 'special status').

If the EU sees Turkey as little more than a distant relative, it should say so by formalising a different set of criteria for accession. At the moment 'Europe', defying the reifying tendencies of IR theory, remains bereft of unified agency. Officially, most of the new members favour Turkey's accession while the old fifteen remain almost evenly divided; but each and every member state is internally profoundly divided on the matter. Turkey knows this but as it genuinely desires EU membership, all it can do is work towards its EU-determined goals and wait. But while it is waiting, its stock market responds to every EU-related snippet of information while public mood also fluctuates accordingly. İskilar, deputy leader of the *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (National Movement Party), noted that EU requirements impose massive psychological pressures on the nation, creating pessimism[11]. The MHP, well known for its anti-European stance, finds that the Christian West shows animosity to Muslim Turkey and tries to subdue the country, to reintroduce, in fact, the treaty of Sèvres.

Hence the EU is resented by some for both creating anxieties through the constant doubting of her 'Europeanness' but also for imposing changes to the political system and diluting the country's sovereignty and independence. The EU, for them, is a latter-day colonial aggressor. The AKP's stance on the issue of reform, however, is qualitatively different. During his 2002 speech, Erdoğan noted 'we certainly wish to enter the EU, however, whether the EU accepts us or not, we are determined to transform the Copenhagen Criteria into the Ankara Criteria'. The country needs reform; that is the AKP's platform. That reform is in line with the EU's demands, but the party claims it would pursue it anyway. What it cannot quite say, however, is that the state, judiciary and military establishments might not accept it quite as willingly without the EU banner shining bright above it.

Gül, addressing the TESEV forum in 2002, effectively made the same claim. What Turkey needs to do, it can do without the EU for it is society that desires change even if the 'ruling mindset' is blocking progress. 'Then, even if we cannot accede to the EU, we have lost nothing. On the contrary we will have gained a great deal while the EU will be the one to lose', he noted. So Turkey enthusiastically sets out to comply with the EU criteria. But how much of what is innocuously called 'harmonisation' actually involves a radical redrawing of the political game? And to what extent is Turkey's political establishment unanimously prepared to embrace such a process? That issue is vital for Turkey and yet structurally irrelevant until the EU stops raising essentialist questions regarding Turkey's membership and focuses on the structural, legal and normative fit of its polity with the *acquis communautaire*.

Gül, during an address[12], noted that opening accession negotiations with Turkey is a 'historic and wise step. Its positive effects will be felt far beyond the borders of the EU

and Turkey […] A powerful message will be sent to the whole world that Europe is defined not by a narrow understanding [of] geography or religion, but by common values'.

But 'Europe' may not want to send that message after all. The French and Dutch referendums, for starters, imply that the Union has to do some soul-searching if it is to remain in sync with its own people. The possibility of Turkey's membership inspires fear and angst among some Europeans. As Guida (2004:23-4) shows, arguments against Turkey's membership may not be rational but they are heartfelt, especially as they are conflated with issues of Muslim migrants and their effect on national, rather than strictly European, identity and practice. In fact, the electoral success that Fortuyn's 2002 attack on Islam had in Rotterdam is quite telling. In a city where 40 percent of the population is classed as 'foreign', Fortuyn's opposition to Islam as a backward and intolerant faith won him the local election. Arguably, it also led to his assassination soon after. After the assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh by a Moroccan, following a film criticising Islam's treatment of women, Holland, a country priding itself on its tolerance, witnessed over twenty instances of reprisals and counter-reprisals targeting Muslim schools and mosques as well as churches.

Turkey has nothing to do with all this, of course, but Islam is becoming an issue for Europeans, well beyond 9/11-related security issues, and Turkey happens to be a country with a Muslim population.

This is ironic, to say the least. In a continent where churches stand mostly empty, PM Berlusconi's statement that Christian civilisation is superior to Islamic civilisation should have been met with the same embarrassed silence as many of his past *faux pas*. Not this time. Europe seems trapped between 'political correctness' and its own

demands for multiculturalism and toleration on the one hand and a very strong desire to define 'European culture' in more concrete terms on the other. But where does one draw the line? Giscard D'Estaign draws that line just to the West of Istanbul. His disclaimer, that Turkey is not European, is well known and although it does not represent everyone's feelings, it represents a sizeable portion thereof.

Is Turkey geographically European? This is a question on many lips. Ultimately nobody has defined where Europe ends for the purposes of the EU. For Turkey the answer is 'yes' and its proof twofold: its 1999 candidate status 'graduation' and the fact that Cyprus, that is actually further east than Ankara, is considered European, *ergo* Turkey is European.

But geographical concerns do not end there. Turkey borders countries that are seen as unfriendly, volatile, even dangerous and although Cyprus is just as close to some of them and still qualifies for membership, Turkey actually borders them and represents a more significant diplomatic player in the region than the divided island could ever be, hence more likely to be willing, able or expected to play a role. So, in light of the EU's cherished ENP, how could Turkey's position possibly be a disadvantage?

Turkey *needs* good relations with Syria and Iran, states Gül[13], but it pursues them in concert with the international community in order to establish stability, democracy and freedom in the region. As a NATO country with EU aspirations and a Muslim population in a sensitive area, Turkey is both obliged and ideally suited for the pursuit of a 'neighbourhood policy' of its own. As a secular republic with a Muslim population it can share its understanding with all 'players' in the diplomatic arena and even act as a model for other Muslim societies with democratic aspirations. Turkey could be an asset to the EU, both in security and diplomatic terms.

And then again Turkey could be a liability for Turkey. Park (2005:133) believes that 'the EU is best seen as a security "community" than as a security "actor".' As such, Turkey's proximity to volatile regions is a drawback rather than an asset. And although, arguably, a Muslim EU member would send the correct message to a post 9/11 world, addressing a European Council summit in Warsaw, Erdoğan deplored that Islam has enemies among 'foreigners' (*yabancı*)[14]. Turkey is worried, he stated, at the bigoted (*bağnaz*) approach the world is exhibiting post 9/11, defining terrorism in religious and cultural terms. The Turkish premier stressed that Turkey will attain contemporary democratic standards, as determined by the European Council, while maintaining and benefiting from its predominantly Muslim population's spiritual and cultural identity.

Erdoğan is touching on a most sensitive domestic matter, namely state secularism *à la Atatürk*. Turkey's Republican Ideology, its entrenchment into official institutions and its hold on political priorities will have to be renegotiated and potentially diluted if the normative transition to EU membership is to be completed. Until that time comes, however, the AKP are very careful to not offend Kemalist sensibilities any more than they have to. Chief of General Staff Hilmi Özkök is quoted in the same article stating, yet again, that Turkey is *not* an Islamic country. AKP officials are careful to describe Turkey as a country the majority of whose population is Muslim and politically adept at presenting that as a diplomatic advantage.

But ultimately, diplomatic arguments aside, it seems that, increasingly, Europeans feel their Union is a little more than the sum total of its treaties and charters. Özal (1991:287) observed that '[w]e are destined by geography to live together with and in Europe, whether or not we enter the community'. That may indeed be so. In fact, it may have to be so if the fragile equilibrium in Europe changes. With France and Holland

pulling the emergency break, a potential change of government in Germany and Nicholas Sarkozy's potential assent to the French Presidency could severely upset Turkey's hopes of entering the European 'family home'.

While Turkey's 'fate' is affected by issues such as immigration, Middle Eastern politics and transatlantic relations – issues that have nothing to do with its 'Europeanness' or indeed its progress vis-à-vis the Copenhagen criteria – the question remains: is the EU an exclusive compound that Turkey can 'move into' when she can, so to speak 'afford it', or is it a 'family home' where rules and criteria may apply but ultimately belonging is 'given'? The jury is still out. Turkey is striving to meet formal criteria while the EU stresses its right to interrupt negotiations at any point. The head of the European Commission's delegation to Turkey, Hansjoerg Kretschmer, stated: 'the beginning of accession talks does not necessarily imply that Turkey will enter the EU. There is along and tough road ahead for Turkey.'[15] So Turkey is trying.

So Where Does Turkey Stand Now?

Until the date of 'October 3rd 2005' was offered for membership negotiations to finally begin, the Turkey-EU affair had been limited to negotiations about negotiations. An Associate of the European Communities since 1963, Turkey applied for full membership in 1987 but was not deemed ready. For the next ten years the relationship suffered many reversals and made little progress. In 1996 a Customs Union was signed and, at the 1999 Helsinki Summit, Turkey was finally granted candidate status. And yet it took another five years for the EU to give a date when negotiations would begin. And when they start, later this year, the EU seems to suggest that Turkey should not get its hopes up, as the European Council Presidency Conclusions of 16/17 December 2004 clearly stated that '[t]he shared objective of the negotiations is accession. These

negotiations are an open-ended process, the outcome of which cannot be guaranteed beforehand'.

The Council is stating the obvious here. But the fact that it feels the need to state the obvious suggests that there were inhibitions and concerns regarding Turkey's membership that needed to be actively appeased. Negotiations will begin nevertheless and it is up to Turkey to turn those unconvinced of its European vocation.

The first question the EU asks, or at least the question it asks most openly, is can the Turkish Republic become a European democracy? In order to join, it should. This demand introduces a moral and structural imbalance in the relationship between Turkey and the EU. As Grabbe (2004:15) puts it, 'negotiations' is a misleading term, '[t]he EU is a tough and unyielding partner; 95 percent of its agenda is immovable'. The EU dictates, it does not negotiate.

So can Turkey accomplish what the EU demands? Gül definitely thinks so. During his Bloomberg address, he noted that democracy, the rule of law, human rights, good governance and economic opportunity are universal values that Turkey supports at home, as an EU member should, and in the region, as the 'neighbourhood policy' expects. Gül stressed that Turkey helps build attitudes of reconciliation and compromise in its region, enhancing, he implied, the ENP.

Turkish politicians in general and AKP members in particular have long been advocating their espousal of European values. As early as 2002[16], Erdoğan, noted that 'I define my political ideals within the context of democracy, freedom, tolerance, basic rights, secularism and political participation'. In other words, his beliefs neatly map onto the core values underlying the Copenhagen Criteria and he stresses that Turkey,

through his party, is indeed capable of moving into a future defined by such values that he sees as fully compatible with Turkey's heritage.

Moreover, Erdoğan, aware of the inhibitions EU members harbour regarding Turkey's eligibility and ability to comply with EU standards, challenges the EU to be true to what it preaches and admit Turkey, thus inaugurating a new 'renaissance of tolerance' while also disproving the clash of civilisations paradigm. This line of argument is not new. Former President and original applicant, Turgut Özal (1991:356) argues along the same lines, albeit with more vehemence: '[t]o embrace Turkey, Europe's own view of her own history and perception of the world will need to be as secular and universal as ours is. The Europe capable of accepting Turkey as a full member of the Community will have risen above ethnocentrism'. Erdoğan is more conciliatory. The EU, he says, should be based on shared values such as democracy and not cultural or religious traits. Saying 'no' to Turkey on these grounds would merely exacerbate prejudices on both sides and make the Islamic world feel excluded from an EU that is effectively a Christian club.

Turkish politicians, then, are aware that although, technically, their membership depends on complying with some 80,000 pages of EU legislation, itself no easy task, harmonisation with the *Acquis* may in fact not be enough. As Şeker-Görener (2005:174) notes: 'Turkey's membership prospects have never relied solely on its own internal dynamics. Historically it has largely been about the EU's own identity and its place in world politics. The EU's conflicting attitudes towards Turkey have been a sign of its lack of clarity about its own future status in international affairs.' Or indeed a lack of clarity about its present identity and function. The EU is meant to be, primarily, a community of values, and only secondarily a vaguely geographically bounded space sharing a common history that enriches but does not define it. Or does it? Questions

about 'what it means to be European' and whether Christianity, geography or 'culture' are central to any definition of the term have resurfaced after the resonant 'no' of French and Dutch voters to the European Constitution, a vote interpreted by journalists, activists and politicians alike as a 'no' to enlargement in general. In Turkey, the vote was understood by some as a 'no' to them in particular. Milliyet[17] quoted Dutch politician Geert Wilders under a headline that emphatically read *"Türkleri Durdurmak İçin Mücadele Verdik"* ('we put up a struggle to stop the Turks').

Regardless of whether such statements represent sentiments or strands of argument within the EU in any real way, the Turks are bound to feel embittered and insulted. Especially as being wanted is more important than being admitted. Turkey wants unconditional acceptance not a grudging scrape-through. While the EU is hurting Turkish national pride, otherwise disparate forces are united under the EU banner, parties that would otherwise disagree about the extent or pace of reform and argue over whether Turkey is ready or indeed willing to abandon its collectivist social perception and unitary state model, remain united for the moment. This unity does not go much beyond the surface and yet, for now, it sustains the effort and delays having to assess the normative transformation EU membership demands.

Working Through Turkey's 'To-Do' List.

The 2003 Accession Partnership effectively gave Turkey a to-do list, most of which has already been addressed, albeit not always fully. The EU asks for the informal economy to stamped out, market liberalisation and reforms regarding transport, fishing, taxation and even the collection of statistics. And of course there is the question of the political criteria. Police accountability must be strengthened and law enforcement institutions are expected to collaborate fully. Human rights and individual liberties legislation must be

introduced and upheld with a non-collectivist model of social development in mind. In other words, where Turkish courts would otherwise uphold collective national unity, territorial integrity and the supremacy of the state, now the law, as well as the courts, has to hold the individual as uppermost. To achieve this a profound process of transvaluation is necessary. Turkey has to affect reforms whose normative significance and sweeping effect will profoundly alter the way politics is conducted and the way the state operates. That is what it takes to 'move in' but even after Turkey has satisfied all criteria the EU can still say no, for they need to feel that Turkey 'belongs' on the one hand and that the reforms are sustainable and irreversible on the other.

Industry and Trade Minister Ali Coşkun believes that reforms are, by now, irreversible. Turkey had waited long enough, he notes, now '[t]he result of the entry talks should be Turkey's full membership'[18]. EU Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, agrees that reforms in Turkey have reached in irreversible point[19] but he did not rush to any final conclusions about membership. So Turkey, while trying to meet the Copenhagen criteria, is also advertising the fact that it is trying and it is, in a desperate last attempt, trying to shame Europe into accepting its own rules. There is little else they can do.

And they are indeed trying. A National Programme for the Adoption of the *Acquis* was published as early as 2001 and many of its short term goals have already been achieved while its long and medium-term goals the government is currently working on. When the AKP came to power, the country's EU resolve was bolstered. Constitutional reforms have gone ahead and a new Penal Code was been adopted. No-one would argue that all issues raised by the EU have been dealt with. F-type prisons are yet to be reformed. Although restrictions on broadcasting have been removed, 'the prosecution of writers, journalists and publishers has continued'[20] and the new Penal Code is described by

Nazmi Bilgin, president of the national journalists' union, as a failure, offering nothing more than superficial changes[21]. The perpetrators of honour killings are still not dealt with satisfactorily for the EU and child labour persists. But a nation-wide sweep against child labour is under way, as well as a lively campaign to encourage families to send girls to school including monetary incentives and the '*baba beni okula gönder*' campaign (dad send me to school). Moreover, bureaucratic procedures have been simplified and, as the 2003 Enlargement Report acknowledges, political and legislative reform has been accelerated. Several prisoners sentenced for non-violent expression of opinion were released and the government launched a 'zero tolerance' campaign to ensure that new legislation is properly implemented. The process is not over but it is well on its way.

Both EU and Turkish officials admit that work is still needed in the domain of implementation but nobody can deny that Turkey is changing. The competence of military courts to try civilians has been abolished and state security courts scrapped. Teaching and broadcasting in Kurdish is now permitted, hitches notwithstanding, and Leyla Zana has been freed, pending further legal proceedings. Turkey even championed a solution to the Cyprus problems in concert with European initiatives that the Greek side shot down.

Turkey has gone a long way. And it is keen to advertise that fact. As early as 2002, Erdoğan, during his Washington address, noted that Turkey, with recent adjustments in mind, would soon be ahead of certain EU countries in terms of standards. In 2004[22] he declared that Turkey was ready. That is, it was ready to start negotiations, and the rest would fall into place quickly. This is the opinion of many analysts and commentators. The Economist[23], although acknowledging arguments against Turkish membership as

well as concerns about the country's ability to accept the responsibilities of membership, has joined those who believe that the benefits of Turkey's accession outweighed its disadvantages. As for its readiness, Economist writers disarmingly claim that Turkey should be given the opportunity to try. If, during negotiations they fail, then so be it.

The Economist continues in the same vein. Turkey, it notes, has done what was expected of it. Why was that not enough? 'No other country's putative membership arouses such passions'[24]. Implementation is still wanting, notes the author, admitting that it seems like no coincidence when schools teaching in Kurdish keep failing planning regulations. However, implementation was a problem faced by many current members before they joined. The same rules should apply to Turkey.

Turkey thinks so too and it is often trying to 'shame' the EU into not changing the rules of engagement mid-game. It is bad sportsmanship and it is un-European. Hence Gül (2005) cannot stress enough that Turkey has shown it can honour its part of the deal with the EU. Now it is the EU's turn to do the same and act 'wisely and fairly'. Implicit in such arguments is the fear that there is more at play than formal criteria. Turkey's 'belonging' has been questioned on religious, geographic and cultural terms. None of the above forms part of the EU's official charter but there is no accounting for what the Union stands for in the hearts of its members. Ultimately, this boils down to questions of European identity and, potentially, a need for more straightforward documentation of 'belonging' criteria. In the meantime, and while the EU is building up its 'neighbourhood', Turkey is waiting. Waiting for the EU to make its mind up and waiting for the time that the toughest questions regarding membership will crop up at home.

Transvaluation

As Grabbe (2004:21) correctly notes, Turkey is not a collapsed post-Communist state seeking help; it is a strong, stable state; and a proud state at that. Turkey needs to feel on top of the reforms game, a difficult task when the EU makes no attempt to make the 'accession' process look equal or at least dialectical. But Grabbe is more right than she knows. There is more than pride at stake here. Unlike many eastern European states, Turkey's state structures are intact and that means they will naturally resist fundamental reform, be it out of bureaucratic inertia, conservative preservation of established ways or genuine conviction that 'what is not broken needs no fixing'.

This means that although there is no dialogue between Turkey and the EU regarding the reforms, there are tensions within Turkey about the values that the reform process might be undermining. And unlike other states, Turkey does not *need* EU membership desperately, however passionately it might desire it. The question of the minorities report, published in November 2004, is a case in point. In accordance with EU requirements, a committee looked into Turkey's treatment of its minorities. The resulting report, finding fault with the way the state approached citizenship from its inception, divided both the committee that produced it and the nation. One committee member went as far as to tear the report up during its initial presentation while the prosecutor is investigating whether it constituted an act of treason[25].

And in a way it did, for the report 'betrayed' the existing Turkish state model. For a country where unity and integrity, both on the national and territorial levels, represent constitutionally enshrined principles, the individualism required by the EU in the protection of minorities is, at best, novel, if not outright suspect. Çakmak (2003:71-72) believes that two things must be borne in mind when looking at Turkey's human rights

record. Firstly the boundaries of acceptability and the nature of 'standard practice' especially in the 1980s and 1990s must be seen in terms of the state's struggle to contain the PKK. He believes that human rights violations 'were directly linked to the Kurdish issue', although their scope was much wider than dealing with terrorism and indeed affected unrelated writers, MPs and journalists. More significantly, however, Çakmak finds that Turkey simply did not change with the times. While the rest of the world moved away from unitary states towards assertively pluralistic models of social organisation, Turkey insisted on cherishing its unity and indivisibility. In the meantime, the EU also changed, becoming a political entity for whose membership technical and financial compatibility would no longer suffice.

The reforms now expected of Turkey will force its state model to change drastically. However, it is debatable whether this kind of dramatic change is possible without the current state model being entirely replaced by a new one. And while change is generally welcome, the wholesale abandonment of Turkey's systemic values finds many in opposition. Several issues bring this tension to the fore. For instance, EU calls for a re-trial of the jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan unite Turkish parties[26]. While the EU found that Öcalan was unfairly tried, Turkish politicians unanimously oppose what is generally perceived as unnecessary meddling in Turkey's internal affairs. That it may be, but as part of the accession process, the EU has the right to monitor Turkey's legal proceedings. Even President Sezer spoke against a re-trial urging that the request of the European Court of Human Rights be rejected[27]. Although some deplored Sezer's statement as undermining his impartiality, it is quite significant that a man like Sezer spoke out publicly on the matter. Ahmet Necdet Sezer is a former Constitutional Court Judge, a firm supporter of the secular republic and a man of western vision. The fact

that he too felt that the EU was overstepping the mark provides an excellent illustration of the tensions now faced in Turkey.

Unexpectedly, the government's anti-corruption drive, again an EU priority, has made considerable headway without too much resentment at perceived external interference. Increasing media coverage of corruption trials has been allowed, although no harsh punishments have yet been dealt. In 2004, Parliament launched several corruption probes against alleged wrongdoers[28] including six former ministers as well as former PM Mesut Yılmaz. One of the ministers being investigated, the Public Works and Housing Minister under Ecevit's three-party coalition, Koray Aydin, is accused of profiteering during the 1999 post-earthquake housing crisis.

The anti-corruption drive is championed by both the AKP and the CHP, even though several of their own members are under fire. Although calls to lift ministerial immunity, as the AKP had promised before the election, are still falling on deaf ears, *de facto* immunity was lifted where it was least expected: the hitherto 'untouchable' Turkish military, still the most respected institution in the country and many would argue exactly because Chief of General Staff Hilmi Özkök is not afraid to weed out corrupt officers. Last time a commander had stood trial was three decades ago and on that occasion the man was acquitted. The fact that retired admiral İlhami Erdil as well as several members of his family are facing legal proceedings under Özkök's orders is big news for Turkey[29]. Not everyone was jubilant, of course. Why now? Why Erdil? Was there personal rivalry involved, rather than a genuine desire to rid Turkey of corrupt power-holders?

Only time will tell. Özkök has authorized thirty-nine cases to be investigated, including retired General Sener Eruygur. In the past, such legal proceedings were avoided for fear

of damaging the body's public image and undermining respect. It seems that prosecutions are confirming the military's image as an institution beyond reproach ready to do what is good for the republic, even if that involves self-purging from time to time. Moreover, its anti-corruption drive is giving the armed forces an added élan as they now appear to be actively embracing the EU and assisting the government in their efforts. The two images may prove to be incompatible down the line. For the time being, however, the message is that EU-sponsored initiatives are not necessarily incompatible with the 'Turkish way'.

That, in any case, is the government's argument. In a speech delivered at the London School of Economics (LSE), Gül[30] noted that, while reforms are going well, Turkey is still internally debating its 'European vocation'. Although resistance to the reforms may be implied there, the Foreign Minister noted that all debate is good for democracy. Democracy, he noted, is a 'process of perfection', a test of patience and stamina; results need to ripen, they cannot be imposed. Those resisting us now, Gül seemed to imply, will come round as the reform process takes root. Especially as, the Foreign Minister stressed, in the AKP's EU-drive, the party's most significant ally is the Turkish public. Reforms, he noted, do not need to be imposed as they represent what the people want, thus conferring legitimacy on both the AKP and their 'cause'. By 2014, a realistic accession for Gül, 'Turkey will be a different country'.

And it would have to be for Europe to let it in. For while Gül was addressing his audience in the LSE's Old Theatre, outside, a small but vociferous protest was raging. Partly an anti-globalisation picket, the *Haklar ve Özgürlükler Cephesi* (the Rights and Freedoms Front)[31] were campaigning against isolation cells in Turkey, claiming that since 2000, 117 people have died and 600 left mutilated by torture and force feeding.

The *Cephe* demonstrated against the fact that going on a hunger strike or supporting those who do so is a criminal offence in Turkey.

Less controversially and more problematically for the EU, the Education Personnel Labour Union, Eğitim-Sen, had to resort to the Supreme Court of Appeals to reverse a closure decision made against it by a lower court. Their trespass? A call for education in local dialects[32], perfectly in line with EU demands. Although the Union was ultimately vindicated, this incident shows that Turkey has still some way to go in its attempts to 'get its house in order' in a European fashion. And there are voices raised in opposition to this process, drawing attention to the fact that many EU demands require the prior revision of the political system that is currently neither well thought- through nor in fact acceptable or indeed desirable for many in Turkey.

An Unconditional European Commitment?

On December 14, 2004 www.turkishpress.com published an article under the title 'From Far Right to Far-Left, Anti-EU Turkey Speaks the Same Language'. The article noted that the ultra-nationalist and anti-EU MHP has found unlikely allies in the far left of the political spectrum. Anti-EU does not mean anti-Europe, the surprisingly convergent statements read. The accession process shows no respect for Turkey's cultural and religious peculiarities and exhibits signs of latter-day imperialism. Doğu Perincek, leader of the non-represented Worker's Party finds that in pursuing EU membership, Turkey is straying dangerously from its Kemalist legacy. The MHP agrees: Turkey's entry into the EU ought to be dignified, something that neither the AKP nor indeed Europe seem to realise.

Whether the people agree with the above we cannot know, but on 22 April 2005, Zaman reported the growth of anti-EU sentiments among the population. Undoubtedly

disillusionment and even bitterness with the EU must have grown since the referendums in France and Holland. But even before, many in Turkey were agreeing with opposition leader Deniz Baykal[33] that the AKP's policy of appeasement might not actually serve the country's best interests. Being happy with anything the EU throws Turkey's way, notes Baykal, may foster unfair and undesirable developments. Although he noted that the CHP was still in favour of accession, he warned that the people were losing faith as well as self-confidence.

None of this should come as a surprise, according to a Zaman[34] piece on the latest Turkey appearance of (in)famous American academic Samuel Huntington. Huntington urged Turkey to reinterpret Kemalism, accept its role in the new era of global politics while realising that modernisation is possible without Westernisation. Huntington urged Turkey to diversify Atatürk's 70-year-old principles and adapt them to the 21st Century. The professor said Turkey had to accept that it would never become an EU member and it should explore the idea of becoming the leader of the Islamic countries in its region.

Although such statements are perfectly in line with Huntington's (1996) 'clash of civilisations' thesis, given a new lease of life post 9/11, they show limited understanding of a country that, in the book in question he admits he cannot neatly pigeonhole, to put it mildly. Pre-empting Huntington's statements, classifying Turkey with Islamic countries, and replying to Condoleeza Rice, who described Turkey as a democracy with an Islamic ruling party and as such an example for other Muslim countries, Chief of General Staff Hilmi Özkök reminded the world that Turkey is a secular state. 'Turkey is neither an Islamic state, nor an Islamic country', he said; and if its people are Muslim, its government is not[35]. Whatever the world might expect of Turkey in order to 'accept it', secularism is not something that the establishment is

prepared to let go of. There is so much Turkey is willing to accept by way of pressures and demands, after all it is not after a pat on the head from the West: it wants to be accepted as an equal, or not at all.

In fact Özkök's remarks at the War Academies in Istanbul on 20 April 2005, gave the impression that, with America's now frosty attitude towards Turkey, the EU's evasiveness and the West's non-committal attitude towards the PKK's insurgence under the new name Kongra-Gel, Turkey's western orientation might for the first time in its republican history be shaky. Nevertheless, in November 2004[36] Hilmi Özkök embraced EU, NATO and US priorities by stating that nowadays it is terrorism that constitutes the number one security threat for all countries, not other countries. And yet, journalist Burak Bekdil finds that, rhetoric notwithstanding, if neighbors are not considered foe any more that should be reflected in military procurements. For Bekdil, Turkey's security concept has not changed although some of its specific manifestations may have done so. The overriding urge to protect the country's unity and integrity still informs military planning. National prerogatives and the Atatürkist state-model are still constitutionally protected, reforms notwithstanding. Collectivism still informs the way those implementing legislation think about their duties and responsibilities. National pride and concerns with unity and the country's integrity also form the basis of public opinion's expectations and the press' pet worries.

Turkey is changing. Strict secularism is becoming more flexible, unitary visions of the state are being re-negotiated and Turkey's apprehensive nationalism is being appeased. Some argue that it was about time. 'Kemalism' has become too rigid, too unyielding, too unhelpful. And yet for many others, Kemalism is a living set of ideas and priorities that has served Turkey well for eight decades and should not be abandoned just because

an external body said so. 'Kemalism' is not the exclusive domain of soldiers and bureaucrats. Academics often rush to the defense of the ideology, as do voluntary organizations, from prestigious societies to neighborhood associations.

Dymont, in his article 'The Cult of Atatürk'[37], found that although there is a 'cult of the personality' in Turkey, usually not associated with democracy in the West, Soviet models do not apply here. First of all Turkey is a republic. Secondly this 'cult' is not a state creed forcibly imposed on society, it has genuine and committed supporters. Moreover, contrary to expectations, ideas integral to the 'cult', such as westernisation or secularism, do not suffer from their association with the, for all intents and purposes, 'state ideology'. Dymont found that there are many in Turkey who consider state-sponsored Kemalism 'an ideology that always says no' but remain nevertheless committed to secularism and democracy. On the other hand, many free-thinking intellectuals and journalists still find emotional resonance and political substance in Atatürk's ideas and cherish his image as a reminder and a 'talisman' protecting the system. The 'cult' that strikes a first-time visitor as exaggerated is actually, Dymont admits, 'soft around the edges'. The country is open to debate and disagreement and Atatürk is ultimately whatever each individual Turk chooses to make of him: military hero, famous statesman or the anthropomorphic instantiation of the republic; a figure of history or a guardian of the present.

Erdoğan is paying lip-service to Kemalism and all its principles. He has no choice. Political culture and institutional practice in Turkey rest on a Kemalist benchmark for measuring political legitimacy. Moreover, the protection of Atatürk's principles and his legacy is a constitutional principle (Article 174). EU-oriented constitutional reform did not change the articles that make Turkey's state model different to what the EU has in

mind; no less republican or secular, simply different. For the reforms to turn Turkey into a 'European democracy', the state model has to change fundamentally. These changes are resisted by a variety of groups for a multitude of reasons, ranging from self-interest to genuine conviction that the path to EU accession will weaken the Republic's internal defences and, if the bid proves unsuccessful, the country will fall pray to Islamists and political or religious extremists. The EU does not seem interested in taking any of this on board. For them, if Turkey wants to join the 'club' it has to meet the criteria. How that will be done, or what it takes to do so, is no concern of theirs. Is this irresponsible, hypocritical or a case of '*dura lex, sed lex*'?

The Things the EU Cannot Understand, or Simply Does Not Care to

The first thing that Europe do not understand is that although the Turkish military does 'meddle' with political affairs, their 'knowledge' of politicised armies explains nothing of the Turkish experience where the military had for a long time been the most trusted friend of the Republic. Granted, military 'handling' of fragile democratic institutions often left them bruised but nobody can doubt the fact that military interventions stopped sectarian violence from descending into total chaos on at least two occasions and stabilised the system on several others, see Birand (1987 & 1991) and Hale (1994). It is true, however, that each military intervention restored democracy back to a model conceptualised by the military, in other words the Armed Forces re-equilibrated democracy when it most needed it but did so according to their own blueprint. That blueprint, particularly relevant to the 1997 'post-modern' coup against real or perceived challenges to secularism posed by then PM Necmettin Erbakan, is Kemalist in its origins and military in its clarity and rigidity.

No one would suggest that the EU is 'wrong' in demanding that the military should be kept out of politics for the sake of democratic stability, not even the military. But rather than demanding that the National Security Council is chaired by a civilian, a reform that will not necessarily disrupt the balance of power within the NSC, the EU could take a moment to think that the constitution that is being revised but not rewritten was initially passed under a military government and it reflects all the military's assumptions about the nature and role of the republican state. And these assumptions are shared by large numbers of judges, academics, bureaucrats as well as citizens.

The EU feels it is not its job to understand Turkey. If Turkey wants to join the EU, then it is Turkey's job to change to the extent necessary. Turkey is 'putting its house in order' accordingly. The debate on 'how far reforms should be allowed to go' is of course a debate on whether Turkey is willing to replace its existing state model with one more amenable to EU needs and requirements. The EU has not grasped how far the transvaluation necessary goes. That does not concern it, the EU feels.

Turkey raises all sorts of self-reflection issues within the EU and its membership depends partly on its ability to satisfy formal criteria and partly on the direction the EU's identity crisis takes it. Even if Turkey is finally deemed not to be of the 'family' or, for that matter, to be too distant a cousin to be allowed to move into the European 'family home', it is still a neighbour from a strict geographic point of view and, if decades of political association are taken into account, more than that. Surely a Union that prides itself on being a community of values, a 'family' resting on the elective affinity of shared ideals and an aspirant leader in a 'neighbourhood' perception of international affairs, should try to 'understand' a bit better? If nothing else, a good neighbour would.

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NOTES

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[4] The Economist, 17 March 2005, 'Turkey, Looking to Europe'.

[5] Milliyet, 25 May 2005 'Perde Arkası'.

[6] On the challenge Turkey presents for EU identity, see also, Glyptis (2005).

[7] Times on Line, 10 June 2005 Gerard Baker 'We are Going Cold on Turkey'

[8] See http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/index_en.htm.

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