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Turkey and the European Union: The Domestic Politics of Negotiating Pre-Accession

Kemal Kirisci

I. Introduction

*I*n May 2004, ten countries joined the European Union (EU), to be followed by two more countries most probably in 2007. Turkey, together with Croatia, is the next country in line to enter the pre-accession process for membership. Turkey was given candidate status in December 1999 at the Helsinki European Council summit. However, accession negotiations with Turkey will only start if the European Commission concludes that Turkey has indeed met the Copenhagen political criteria and EU member governments make a positive decision at their European Council meeting in December 2004.¹ Unlike the case of other candidate countries, the decision “to give or not to give” a negotiating date to Turkey stands as a very great challenge. A variety of reasons—ranging from the size and population of Turkey, its geographical location, its low level of economic development compared to the EU, and, more importantly, the fact that the overwhelming majority of the population is Muslim—make determining a date for the start of the negotiations an extremely controversial and difficult issue for many EU governments and for European public opinion.

Turkey itself is facing massive challenges as a function of its aspiration to join the EU. In November 2000, the EU adopted the Accession Partnership document, which listed the reforms that Turkey was expected to adopt to be able to meet the Copenhagen political criteria.² Turkey has come very close to meeting these criteria. However, this became possible only after three years of divisive debates and

resistance to reforms from “Euroskeptic” circles in Turkey. It was the decisive outcome of the November 2002 elections that brought in a government with a strong will to meet the political criteria that made this change possible. Nevertheless, reforms such as the lifting of the death penalty, the introduction of cultural rights for ethnic minorities (especially Kurds), the expansion of various democratic freedoms, the introduction of legal and administrative measures to curb endemic torture, and institutional arrangements to reduce the influence of the military in Turkish politics, were all major challenges to the political system. These have been reforms that Euroskeptics energetically resisted at every stage. Now that the reforms have been adopted, there are still efforts to hinder their implementation. However, this resistance is weakening as the Turkish state and society are being transformed in an unprecedented manner.

In the last few years, Turkey has also had to meet challenges in the area of foreign policy. Most important has been the question of Cyprus. Although the resolution of the Cyprus situation is not a prerequisite (in the sense that it is not part of the Copenhagen political criteria), the European Commission as well as EU governments and the European Parliament have made it quite clear that Turkey is much more likely to receive a date for accession negotiations if the question is resolved.

The survival of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) as an independent and separate state had long been an unquestioned national cause in Turkey. Former prime minister of Turkey Bülent Ecevit summarized this preference in May 1999 as “no solution is actually the solution.” However, both in TRNC as well as in Turkey, emerging public opinion questioned the traditional policy. Early in 2004, the government’s policy shifted drastically. This, in turn, opened the way to a round of negotiations culminating in the referendum of 24 April 2004 over the “Annan Plan.” The change in Turkish policy was no less than a revolution that required bitter political battles. It is highly unlikely that this would have occurred without the pressure of the EU and the carrot of EU membership.

Similar observations can be made about Turkey’s policy toward the war in Iraq in general, and the Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq in specific. The EU is far from having a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). It has been aspiring to develop one since the adoption of the Treaty on the European Union in 1992. Yet, as the crisis over the United States’ intervention in Iraq demonstrated, the EU became bitterly split. Nevertheless, the decision of the Turkish parliament in March 2003

not to allow U.S. troops to transit through Turkey came as a surprise to many Europeans. Many in Europe had believed that Turkey was too loyal or too dependent on the United States. There were also those who suspected that Turkey could become a “Trojan horse” of the U.S. within the EU. This was a powerful feeling, particularly among the French who traditionally have opposed the Americans and have advocated for a strong and independent EU foreign and security policy. Furthermore, the March 2003 decision also demonstrated that Turkey was able to reach a democratic decision on such a critical issue. Many Europeans had thought that Turkey would concede to the pressures of the pro-American military. In a similar manner, the government also resisted pressure from military and nationalist circles to militarily intervene in northern Iraq to preempt the prospective emergence of an independent Kurdish state. Then in October 2003, after securing the parliament’s authorization to deploy troops in Iraq, the government chose *not* to send troops, after Iraqis and especially Kurds opposed it. These decisions were appreciated by the public and by governmental circles in the EU.

In the midst of all these challenges, slowly but surely the EU and Turkey are moving closer together. Unless a crisis erupts, all indications are that the likelihood of Turkey receiving a date to start accession negotiations is increasing. The challenge now seems to be centered on whether the European Council member states will actually live up to their end of the deal reached at the Council summits in December 1999 and 2002.

How can one explain the political process that has brought Turkey, after four decades of membership aspirations, to the very gates of EU membership? This essay will argue that the process was primarily driven by a long and often bitter process of “negotiation” between advocates and opponents of membership within Turkey, on the one hand, and between a range of Turkish “negotiators or players” and their EU counterparts, on the other.

This process of negotiation might best be captured with the help of Putnam who, in his seminal work, envisages negotiations (diplomacy) to be composed of two sets of games that are being pursued simultaneously.³ There are the negotiations being pursued between diplomats or decision makers at one level, and there are also the negotiations taking place between these decision makers and their respective national constituencies at another level. In other words, the decision makers have

to be able to “sell” the decision made at the first level to the actors in the second one, or to the public in the largest sense of the word.

A modification to this model can help to better explain the Turkish case. It is also useful to add three more elements to the two-level games to make them more reflective of the domestic political aspects of international interactions. The first one is the way decision makers in one country interact with the public in the other country. The second one involves the level of interaction that takes place between the civil societies of the two countries. The third element concerns the way critical third-party players, such as the European Union, NATO, or the United States, relate or interact with domestic actors involved in negotiation in a particular domestic context. The latter case is particularly critical because the discourse and policies adopted by the third party can help tip the balance in favor of one or the other player in the domestic negotiation. This essay argues that the balance in the domestic negotiation scene in Turkey has been very much a function of the nature of the relationship between Turkey and the EU. The more the EU and Turkey have engaged in a “virtuous-constructive” rather than a “negative-exclusionary” set of discursive interactions, the more the pro-membership players have been strengthened, both in Turkey and the EU. If the negotiation game is thought of in terms of iterations both at the domestic as well as at the EU-Turkey level, the process has been edging both sides closer and closer. However, the decision to be reached in December 2004 at the European Council remains the ultimate arbiter of whether the pro-EU membership players in Turkey will prevail.

II. Historical Background:

From the Ankara Treaty of 1963 to the Pending December 2004 Amsterdam Summit of the European Council

Turkey’s quest to become part of Europe and, later, the European Union has been a long one. A Westernization and modernization process started as early as the late 18th century in the Ottoman Empire. However, it was with the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923 and with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s reforms that Turkey embarked upon a systematic and profound modernization project. Atatürk defined his efforts to achieve a modern, secular, and Western society as a process of “catching up” with contemporary civilization. This process was itself manifested in an aspiration to become part of Europe.⁴ From the early days of the Turkish republic, the primary aim of Atatürk

and his supporters was to see the country recognized as a respected European power.⁵ In 1949, Turkey became a founding member of the Council of Europe, and joined NATO in 1952. Turkey's relationship with the European Economic Community (EEC) started in 1959, when the government applied for associate membership.⁶ This application resulted in the Ankara Association Agreement on 12 September 1963. The provisions of this Agreement envisaged a gradual process of economic integration between Turkey and the EEC. Article 28 also raised the prospects of eventual Turkish membership in the EEC. In 1970, the Additional Protocol was signed. The Protocol envisaged a 22-year transitional period that would end with the establishment of a customs union. Yet Turkey's relationship with the European Community (EC) experienced problems from the mid-1970s onwards because of Turkey's internal economic problems and political instability. The military coup of 1980 worsened relations. The early 1980s also coincided with Greece's membership in the EC. Once a member, Greece rose regular objections to any improvement in EC-Turkish relations because of Greek-Turkish bilateral problems and Cyprus. Nevertheless, transition to democracy and economic liberalization led Turkey to apply for membership in 1987. In its opinion of 17 December 1989, the Commission concluded that Turkey was not ready to be a member of the European Union for economic, political, and social reasons.⁷ However, the Commission did not in any way question the right of Turkey to become a member of the EC sometime in the future. This is, of course, in stark contrast to the Commission's failure to consider Morocco's 1987 application on the grounds that Morocco is not a European country.

After the end of the Cold War, most of the 1990s were a very difficult period for Turkey as violence in southeast Turkey increased and the Kurdish problem, together with widespread human rights violations, led to a marked deterioration in EU-Turkish relations.⁸ Nevertheless, in spite of considerable resistance from human rights circles and the European Parliament, in the end both sides succeeded in signing the Customs Union Agreement of January 1996.⁹ In Turkey this new treaty was very much perceived as a vital step toward eventual full membership.¹⁰ Hence, when at the Luxembourg summit of the European Council in December 1997, Turkey was *not* included in the list of candidate countries for the next round of enlargement, there was considerable governmental and public disillusionment as well as anger. In protest, the Turkish government went as far as breaking off political dialogue with the EU, and refused to attend any EU meetings. The

Turkish government feared that the EU wanted to develop a “special relationship” with Turkey that would fall short of membership.¹¹

A major breakthrough came at the December 1999 EU summit in Helsinki when Turkey was granted candidate status. Many factors played a role in this dramatic turnaround in the EU’s position.¹² The arrival of the social democrat government of Gerhard Schröder in Germany in 1999, replacing Helmut Kohl’s Christian Democrat dominated government, had a major impact on the decision. Christian Democrats have traditionally been much less sympathetic to Turkish membership in the EU. The end of the violence surrounding the Kurdish problem in Turkey with the capture and trial of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and the formation of a new coalition government in April, led by the social democrat Bülent Ecevit, opened the way toward improving democracy in the country. Ecevit wrote a personal letter in June 1999 to his German counterpart Schröder that he was committed to democratizing and liberalizing the country, and he expressed his expectation of support for eventual Turkish membership.¹³ Relations between Greece and Turkey began to improve, too. The efforts of both foreign ministers, George Papandreou and Ismail Cem, received growing public support subsequent to the two earthquakes the countries experienced in the summer of 1999. An unprecedented process of *rapprochement* in Greek-Turkish relations began, both at the governmental and the societal level. Greece actually became a vocal advocate of Turkish membership in the European Union.¹⁴ These factors created a climate conducive to the Helsinki decisions. Most importantly, the Helsinki summit foresaw the preparation of an Accession Partnership document that outlined the economic and political reforms that had to be adopted by Turkey to meet the Copenhagen criteria. This procedure was employed with the other candidate countries at the December 1997 Luxembourg summit. In return, Turkey prepared a national program outlining the reforms to be made in the short and long terms.

In the summer of 2001, the Turkish parliament finally adopted a series of critical amendments to the Turkish constitution to facilitate political reforms that met the Copenhagen criteria. These reforms were welcomed by the progress report published by the European Commission in 2001, although the report also noted that there was still a lot of ground to cover before the Copenhagen political criteria would be met.¹⁵ These developments coincided with continued improvement in Greek-Turkish relations as well as a major breakthrough on Cyprus,

when Rauf Denktaş and Glascos Klerides met in December 2001 with the intention of restarting negotiations for the settlement of the Cypriot problem. Furthermore, a compromise agreement was reached between Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States about the use of NATO facilities in the context of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), adding to the positive climate in EU-Turkish relations.¹⁶ This climate played a critical role in resolving the objections of some members of the EU to Turkey's participation in the Convention on the Future of Europe.¹⁷ This was reflected in the decision of the Laeken European Council summit in December 2001. Turkey had finally gained access to the Convention. In Turkey this was received as a very positive development, considering that Turkey had been completely left out of the institutional arrangements to accommodate the new wave of enlargement introduced by the Nice Treaty of 2000.

However, in 2002, the reform process slowed when Euroskeptics, as well as the nationalist right-wing partner of the coalition government, led by Devlet Bahçeli, began to object to some of the critical reforms required for meeting the Copenhagen political criteria.¹⁸ The reforms included the lifting of the death penalty and the introduction of certain cultural rights, especially for the Kurds. The spring of 2002 was characterized by a very heated, divisive, and contentious debate on membership in the EU. The standard accusations gained intensity: that the EU was a Christian club that would never admit Turkey, and that the reforms being demanded aimed to weaken Turkish national sovereignty and territorial integrity. The campaign of the Euroskeptics included hacking the e-mail messages of the European Commission representative, Karen Fogg. Many public figures supportive of membership who had communicated with her by e-mail were branded as collaborators and traitors to Turkey and its independence.¹⁹ Yet, in spite of divisions within the coalition, the government received enough votes to push through a critical reform package in August 2002. It addressed the above as well as other sensitive issues. Support from pro-EU civil society groups, ranging from the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD) and the Economic Development Foundation (IKV) to *ad hoc* groups such as Avrupa Hareketi (the Europe Movement), as well as media campaigns, helped to mobilize the critical parliamentary margin.²⁰ Powerful pro-EU public opinion also contributed to this outcome.²¹ However, relations within the coalition making up the government became strained, and the government had to hold an early election in November 2002.

The outcome of the elections in November was no less than a political earthquake. All the government parties as well as those political parties that had served in previous governments lost their seats.²² Instead, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), a breakaway party from an existing Islamist one, won an overwhelming majority of the seats to comfortably form a government. The social democrat Republican People's Party (CHP) returned to the parliament as the *only* opposition party. The AKP had entered elections with a clear pro-EU agenda and promised to support reforms. The CHP, too, had advocated membership in the EU. Once the government was in place, a campaign was mounted to convince European governments to offer Turkey a date for negotiations. However, to the great disappointment of the government, at the Copenhagen summit Turkey was given no more than "a date for a date." Accordingly, the European Council promised Turkey that in December 2004 it would consider whether accession negotiations could start "without delay" as long as Turkey completed its remaining reforms.²³ The government had hoped to have negotiations start before ten new countries formally joined the EU in May 2004. It was concerned that Turkey could face additional complications if the decision to start negotiations depended on the support of twenty-five, rather than fifteen, member countries. The ten new countries included the Greek side of Cyprus, and the government feared that without a solution to the Cyprus issue, the Greek Cypriots would likely veto a date for Turkey.

At the Copenhagen summit, the government also tried very hard to gain a breakthrough on the deadlocked negotiations over Cyprus as well as get a negotiation date. The government, freshly in power and facing considerable opposition from hard-liners and the state establishment, argued that it would be political suicide to advocate a compromise on Cyprus and still face the risk of *not* getting a date for negotiations. In spite of hectic efforts and growing public opinion in support of a solution among Turkish Cypriots on the island, the government failed to deliver a breakthrough. Instead, Rauf Denktaş, the president of TRNC and chief negotiator for the Turkish Cypriot side, walked away from the last round of talks in the Hague in March 2003 without accepting a solution. Subsequently, when the Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, prepared his report on Cyprus in April 2003, the Turkish side was labeled the culprit in the failure.²⁴

The government faced these tough political issues during a period when the actual leader of the AKP, Tayyip Erdogan, could not serve

as prime minister because of a technicality in Turkish electoral law that kept him from contesting the November 2002 election. This naturally weakened the political strength of the government. However, in a by-election held in March to fill an empty seat in parliament, Erdogan was carried into the parliament with a comfortable margin. He took over the premiership from Abdullah Gül, who continued to serve in the cabinet as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister. Subsequently, the government turned its focus on remaining internal reforms to meet the Copenhagen specifications. Two sets of reforms introduced in June and August critically strengthened the right to broadcast and educate in minority languages, and curtailed the institutional channels of influence that the military traditionally enjoyed over Turkish politics.²⁵ These were highly controversial and contested reforms that were resisted by supporters of the status quo. The developments were accompanied by a steady amelioration in the Turkish economy, which had fallen into a deep recession in February 2001. The conspicuous recovery of the economy became a factor that steadily strengthened the hand of the government.

The impact of the reforms became increasingly visible during the second half of 2003. The performance of the Turkish stock exchange, as well as interest and exchange rates, became visible measures of government performance in respect to the adoption and implementation of the reforms. The more the “markets” perceived the government’s performance as positive in respect to a negotiation date, the more the value of shares at the stock exchange increased and the Turkish currency, traditionally very weak, gained value against the U.S. dollar as well as the Euro. Furthermore, the public use of Kurdish in the form of publications, concerts, and conferences (especially in Kurdish populated areas) became much more visible. Maybe most importantly, calls by certain hard-liners went unheeded that emergency rule should be reintroduced in southeastern provinces because of threats of instability emanating from neighboring Iraq. Furthermore, the security forces and the government succeeded in handling the aftermath of the November 2003 terrorist attacks in Istanbul in a very professional and effective way. The culprits were identified and prosecuted in an unusually transparent manner, without putting any of the gains from the reforms into doubt. The government and the prime minister in person unequivocally expressed empathy and solidarity with the Jewish community in Turkey.

The progress report and strategy paper on Turkey, prepared by the European Commission and released in October 2003, acknowledged the reforms and progress.²⁶ Nevertheless, the Commission did note that the implementation of the reforms would be closely monitored and that there remained a number of areas where reforms were still needed. The Commission also established a link between getting a date for accession negotiations and the solution of the Cyprus problem. The linkage provoked reactions in Turkey and arguments that the solution of the Cyprus problem had not been a part of the Copenhagen political criteria. The controversy continued until the visit of Romano Prodi in January 2004, when he affirmed that the solution of the Cyprus problem was *not* part of the Copenhagen criteria, and that the Commission would base its final recommendation to the European Council only on the reforms and their implementation. However, he did note that the ultimate decision would be a political one and that the absence of a solution in Cyprus risked affecting the final outcome negatively.

Subsequently, the government did indeed change its policy on Cyprus, and the Turkish Cypriot community overwhelmingly supported the Annan Plan at a referendum held in April 2004. Although the rejection of the plan by the Greek Cypriots prevented the island from being united, the Turkish Cypriots were exonerated from the accusation that they prevented a solution.

In respect to the completion and implementation of the Copenhagen criteria, a major breakthrough was achieved in June 2004 when Leyla Zana and her colleagues were released from detention, and broadcasting started in ethnic minority languages, including Kurdish. These developments were acknowledged by the European Council summit on 17–18 June 2004. The European Council reiterated its earlier decision to open negotiations “without delay” when and if the European Commission reports that Turkey “fulfills the Copenhagen criteria.”

III. The Domestic Politics of Getting to Pre-Accession

The Turkish government has had to negotiate the issue of EU membership on the one hand with the EU (in particular the European Commission and the member countries as well as occasionally the European Parliament) and, on the other hand, with various constituencies within Turkey itself. The domestic constituencies have included civil society groups, such as trade unions, business associations, and EU-specific nongovernmental organizations, as well as political parties and the

broader public opinion. It has also included the military and various bureaucracies—in other words, the state establishment. The politics of negotiating and breaking the resistance to the adoption of reforms has not been easy. The resistance, especially in the early stages of the reform process, came from members of the parliament, bureaucracies, and the military, as well as their allies among the politicians and in civil society—often academics, journalists, and retired officials, who could make their views publicly known more easily than currently serving officials. The government has had to rely on the political support of pro-EU civil society groups and public personalities, ranging from academics and journalists to pro-EU liberal retired diplomats and high-ranking retired military officers, to overcome the reluctance to adopt and support the reforms.

In the first three years of the process that started with the release of the Accession Partnership (AP) document by the European Commission in November 2000,²⁷ the coalition government was divided within itself. The right-wing Nationalist Action Party (MHP) was often the first obstacle in the way of some of the more critical reforms.²⁸ The absence of coherence and powerful political will to pursue reforms would, in turn, weaken the government's ability to mobilize support among crucial bureaucracies, such as the Ministry of Interior and Justice, not to mention the military. This was most conspicuously manifested during the preparation of the National Program for the Adoption of the *Acquis* (NPAA).²⁹ In most other candidate countries, the preparation of such a document was quite straightforward and completed within a matter of weeks. Conversely, the Turkish proceedings dragged on until the end of March. The government had to negotiate endlessly with different parts of the state apparatus in an effort to find an acceptable formulation for reforms, especially on the more sensitive issues like the lifting of the death penalty, the expansion of freedom of expression, and the introduction of cultural rights. There were a number of draft versions prepared. The final version fell well short of expectations and the AP itself.

The wording adopted for the critical reforms was vague and ambiguous. Cases in point were the lifting of capital punishment and the introduction of cultural rights. The AP emphasized the removal of “any legal provisions forbidding the use by Turkish citizens of their mother tongue in TV/radio broadcasting” and the need to ensure the “cultural diversity and guarantee of cultural rights for all citizens irrespective of their origin.” It also specified the need to “abolish [the] death penalty,

[and] sign and ratify Protocol No. 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights” in order to meet the Copenhagen political criteria. In addition, the AP called for the reduction of the influence of the military by noting the need to “align the constitutional role of the National Security Council as an advisory body to the government in accordance with the practice of EU member states.”³⁰ The NPAA was simply silent on the prospects of TV/radio broadcasting in mother-tongue languages other than Turkish and the reduction of the military’s influence.³¹ Instead, it noted that the official language of Turkey and that of education was Turkish. It did, though, stipulate that there could be no obstacles placed on the free use of other languages and dialects by people in their day-to-day lives. However, the NPAA did maintain that this freedom could not be used for the purposes of separatism. Regarding capital punishment, the NPAA did not go beyond stating that the parliament would consider lifting it in the medium term, and remained silent on the adoption of Protocol No. 6.³² Hence, the NPAA reflected the attempt to strike a balance between the need to meet the Copenhagen criteria and the unwillingness to implement reforms on the most sensitive issues.³³

It was not surprising that most of these issues were not addressed until the first half of 2002, with the debate that surrounded them bitterly divisive. Serious tensions occurred within the governing coalition. Ironically, when the reforms were finally adopted in August 2002, they had gone well beyond what had been envisaged in the NPAA. However, the critical reforms could only be adopted with the support of votes from opposition parties. The MHP refused to lend its support. This further strained relations within the governing coalition and led to a decision to hold early elections. The strong majority that the new government received in the elections, accompanied by a growing confidence in the ranks of pro-EU circles, enabled the government to adopt further reforms during the first half of 2003. The government improved on earlier reforms of cultural rights, especially by adopting legislation facilitating their implementation. It also signed Protocol No. 6 as well as Protocol No. 7, which abolished the death penalty in wartime too. The role of the military was indeed curtailed by redefining its status in the National Security Council. In adopting these reforms, the government went considerably beyond what was initially stated in the NPAA. Not surprisingly, the new version of the NPAA, published in July 2003, is in much greater harmony with the new Accession Partnership document adopted by the EU in March 2003.³⁴

Nevertheless, the government still faced resistance. This time the resistance was in respect to implementation. It manifested itself most openly in the area of cultural rights. There were, for example, reports of officials refusing to register Kurdish names for newborn babies until they were instructed to do so by courts ruling in favor of complaints from the public. Similarly, some local police chiefs attempted to prevent concerts, conferences, or cultural activities held in Kurdish in southeastern cities or towns. On each occasion, it would be intervention from higher-level local government or courts or the prosecutor's office that would resolve the problem. There were also efforts by some officials to prevent courses in the Kurdish language by raising technical obstacles, claiming that the premises where such courses were planned did not meet building codes, for example.

However, slowly but surely, implementation appears to be improving, even if the EU and the European Parliament continue to flag implementation problems in respect to cultural rights.³⁵ The government acknowledges the problems and seems resolute to overcome them. Implementation problems are routinely addressed at the beginning of each weekly cabinet meeting to ensure that governmental decisions are carried out.

The question of Cyprus is one other area where the government met constant resistance. The previous government had felt compelled to encourage Rauf Denktash to enter negotiations over the plan announced by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in November 2002.³⁶ This uniquely detailed and comprehensive plan envisaged the establishment of a reunited Cyprus, delicately striking a balance between the two sides on the island. The negotiations failed to produce a version of the Plan acceptable to both sides before the Copenhagen European Council summit in December 2002. An effort to achieve a last minute compromise by March 2003 failed miserably when the new Turkish government, overwhelmed with the crisis over Iraq, could not persuade Rauf Denktash and his allies in Turkey to relent. Consequently, the Greek-Cypriot government would be entering the EU as representing Cyprus. The Helsinki summit had noted: "The European Council underlines that a political settlement will facilitate the accession of Cyprus to the European Union. If no settlement has been reached by the completion of accession negotiations, the Council's decision on accession will be made without the above being a precondition. In this the Council will take account of all relevant factors."³⁷ The failure of the Turkish side to cooperate in finding a solution around the Annan

Plan, and the declaration by Rauf Denktash that he considered the Annan Plan “dead,” led the Greek side to clear the final legal hurdle on the way to membership in May 2004.

The unwillingness to encourage the Turkish-Cypriot side to achieve a solution via the Annan Plan, in spite of the Turkish government’s commitment, was a conspicuous example of the difficulties created by those circles in Turkey committed to preserving the status quo. Pre-empting a solution to the Cyprus situation had become a convenient tool in the hands of those who either did not wish to see Turkey progress along the path toward EU membership or who simply resented the damage the reform process was inflicting upon their interests. Cyprus was a particularly easy card to play as the plight of Turkish Cypriots was always considered to be a national cause. Advocates of a solution in Cyprus risked accusations of wanting to give away Cyprus for the personal benefits that would accrue from EU membership. Nevertheless, the December 2002 and January 2003 Turkish-Cypriot demonstrations in support of a solution and EU membership, accompanied by an unprecedented public debate in Turkey about Cyprus, gradually began to change the climate in favor of the government. The government also succeeded in consolidating its power and leadership during the course of the first half of 2003.

The election of Tayyip Erdogan to parliament in a by-election in March and his popularity as prime minister, in addition to the decisiveness with which his government pushed two sets of critical reforms through parliament, also strengthened the hand of the government. The success in getting these reforms adopted brought Turkey very close to meeting the Copenhagen political criteria. This was acknowledged by the European Commission in its regular progress report for 2003, as well as at the European Council summit in Rome in December.³⁸ However, the encouraging signs from the EU were also accompanied by immense pressure since the absence of a solution over Cyprus would severely complicate Turkey’s prospects for getting a negotiating date in December 2004.³⁹

These pressures were exacerbated by the outcome of the December 2003 elections in TRNC. The results indicated a bitterly divided island, although with a slight edge enjoyed by the ticket that advocated EU membership and a solution to the problem in Cyprus. This opened the prospects for the government in Ankara to entertain a last minute attempt to restart negotiations over the Annan Plan. The government by now had not only consolidated its power but had also acquired

experience in mobilizing support for a political initiative. Additionally, it had the enormous advantage of an economy that was giving robust signs of recovery. The inflation rate had been falling at a pace well beyond what had been expected and industrial output was expanding, accompanied by an explosion in exports. The “markets” in Turkey were optimistic but also very sensitive to any sign of deviation from policies enhancing the likelihood of Turkey receiving a negotiating date. A combination of these factors enabled the government to skillfully negotiate, during the course of January 2004, a decision with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the military, and the president’s office—not to mention Rauf Denktaş—to revise Turkey’s decades old policy. The new policy lent unequivocal support to restarting talks on the basis of the Annan Plan, with the clear intention of reaching a solution by May 2004, so that the way to the accession of a reunited Cyprus to the EU would be opened. Tayyip Erdogan argued that Turkey’s new strategy was “always to be one step ahead of the Greek-Cypriots” in respect to finding a solution.

Retrospectively, it is highly likely that this revolutionary turnabout in Turkey’s Cyprus policy will be remembered as the most critical decision that this government was able to wrench from domestic constituencies resisting the changes. This turnabout may come to be seen as the moment when the balance between those in Turkey who were in support of EU membership and those who were against it tipped decisively in favor of the former group.

IV. The Politics of Supporting versus Opposing the EU

At the risk of oversimplification, it is possible to identify two main groups in respect to the domestic politics of Turkey’s EU membership aspirations. The first group is composed of Europhiles. They are outright advocates of EU membership for a variety of reasons, ranging from ideological to political and economic. They argue that efforts to meet the Copenhagen criteria and pre-accession itself will contribute to Turkey becoming a more democratic and prosperous country. These people do not necessarily feel disturbed by the erosion of national sovereignty, and consider the sharing or transfer of sovereignty with EU institutions an acceptable cost of membership. In other words, they are comfortable with the notion of a postmodern state with its pluralist democracy, multicultural identity, and multi-tiered governance. Among these people there are even those who use a nationalist dis-

course by arguing that a Turkey that is a member of the EU would also be a Turkey that is economically, politically, and militarily more powerful and influential in its region.

The other group is composed of Euroskeptics. They resist change and reform. They consider the reforms a threat to national security and the independence of the country. Typically, they are extremely wary of supranationalism. They are suspicious of the EU as well as the international community at large, often arguing that the EU and the West in general aim to weaken Turkey and cause its territorial disintegration. Some view the reforms, especially the ones on cultural rights, freedom of expression, and the weakening of the military's role in Turkish politics, as tools with which the EU aims to implement its grand policy of weakening Turkey. They consider these reforms dangerous to Turkey's ability to survive and meet the security challenges arising from a particularly problematic neighborhood. In this group, there are many officials who see their influence and power being eroded by the reforms. There are also those who are uncomfortable with concepts like transparent and accountable government. The EU, in their eyes, is an intruder or a threat to their way of life. There are also those who oppose the EU on the grounds that membership will erode Turkish culture and identity.

These two groups, of course, are far from being internally homogenous. Among the advocates of membership in the EU, paradoxically, there are many who do not actually trust the EU. Public opinion surveys in Turkey regularly record high levels of support for membership accompanied with low levels of trust in the EU. Many also believe that the EU would not admit Turkey even if Turkey were to meet all the Copenhagen criteria.⁴⁰ On the other hand, among the Euroskeptics there are also those who argue that they are not against Turkish membership *per se*. However, they argue that Turkey's geographical location and the difficult neighborhood that it finds itself in should entitle Turkey to special treatment. In other words, they advocate the dilution of some of the reforms, such as the lifting of capital punishment, the introduction of cultural rights for minority groups, and the reduction of the influence and role of the military in government decision making.⁴¹

Both groups span the political spectrum, Left to Right. Currently, the AKP, which defines itself as a conservative political party with a strong Islamist background, is the most vocal advocate of EU membership while the MHP, also a conservative/right-wing nationalist party, is

conspicuously against membership. Yet public opinion surveys have also shown that support for membership among MHP voters is surprisingly high. In a survey run in the midst of the divisive debates preceding the August 2002 package, the average of those voting for MHP and supporting membership was higher (68%) than the average for the country (64%).⁴² The social democratic CHP is openly supportive of EU membership. In the parliament, it has lent support for the reform packages adopted by the government. However, there are many prominent CHP figures who have on numerous occasions spoken against policies that would bring Turkey closer to the EU. The Cyprus problem is a case in point. Both Deniz Baykal, the leader of the CHP, and some of his lieutenants have resisted policies seeking a solution to the problem. Onur Öymen stated that on Cyprus their position was no different from the nationalist right-wing MHP. Even though there was some reaction against this statement from within the Party, the leader of the Party did accuse the government of "selling Cyprus to the Greek Cypriots."⁴³

The Motherland Party (ANAP) and the True Path Party (DYP), two conservative liberal parties that have been voted out of the parliament in the last elections, have traditionally advocated membership in the EU. Yet they too have included politicians in their ranks who have not been very keen to support reforms. One political party that was openly and unashamedly opposed to the European Union was the Islamist Welfare Party (Refah), led by Necmettin Erbakan. Refah has since been replaced by the Saadet Party, which has maintained the same line. In public opinion polls, it is Saadet voters who have a level of support for membership in the EU below 50%.⁴⁴ Lastly, there are left-wing groups that are as much opposed to the EU as nationalist right-wing groups. Surprisingly, they often use very similar slogans and discourse as their nationalist right-wing counterparts. For example, the Socialist Party and the Turkish Communist Party accuse the EU of imperialism and wanting to erode Turkey's national independence and sovereignty.

The state apparatus, with its military, judiciary, police, treasury, educational establishment, and administration in general, is far from homogenous. It is possible to find officials that are openly in support of the EU as well as those who are against it. However, state institutions often avoid making their views known openly. There is a long established tradition to maintain a uniform facade. The views can often be deduced, though, from practices or from opinions expressed by retired personnel. Hence, for example, it is not unusual to find retired

generals or diplomats who take positions and offer arguments in support of or against EU membership. One institution that is often under close public scrutiny in respect to EU membership is the military. Both within Turkey and abroad, the military is often presented as being against membership. The argument is that the military is uncomfortable with many of the reforms demanded by the Copenhagen political criteria, especially those that call for the curtailment of their influence. The military is also often cited as one major, if not *the* major, opponent of a solution in Cyprus.

Undoubtedly, the need to accommodate the views of Euroskeptics within the state bureaucracies and the military played a very important role in why it took the government so long to put together the first NPAA in 2001, and why this document fell well short of the initial AP. There were a number of reforms with which the military seemed uncomfortable, notably reforms centering on freedom of expression and minority cultural rights. Yet, in the end, the military did not stand in the way of these reforms. Furthermore, the military did not oppose the gradual lifting of the emergency rule law in the southeastern provinces of Turkey. (The emergency rule law was introduced in 1987 to combat the PKK and separatism in southeastern Anatolia.) The law was considered by many human rights groups as the primary cause of widespread human rights violations and forced migration.⁴⁵ In 2002, when capital punishment was being heatedly debated by the politicians and the public, the military made it very clear that they did not object to such a reform.⁴⁶ Most importantly, the military acquiesced to a reform package in June 2003 that significantly curtailed the powers of the National Security Council, the body through which the military traditionally exercised its influence in Turkish politics.⁴⁷ More surprisingly, in January 2004, the military supported the new governmental initiative to restart negotiations over Cyprus. When Rauf Denktaş seemed reluctant to lend his support to the initiative of the Turkish government, the Chief of the Turkish General Staff, General Hilmi Özkök, cautioned him that the military was behind the initiative.⁴⁸ Furthermore, in a gesture of confidence, the Commander of the Ground Forces, General Aytaç Yalman, cancelled a routine visit to inspect Turkish troops on the island.⁴⁹

Yet there have been a number of occasions when high-ranking officers expressed views that cannot be reconciled with the official position of the military as expressed by the Office of the Chief of Staff. The Turkish military is known for its discipline and rigid chain of com-

mand. Hence, the expression of such opinions, openly or covertly, is considered a sign of discomfort with the official military position and the government. It is generally known that there is considerable concern in the officer corps about the credentials and credibility of the current government and the AKP in respect to secularism. There are many in the corps who are suspicious of the government's commitment to secularism. The policies as well as statements of government officials and the AKP are closely scrutinized. Often high-ranking officers do not shy away from making their opinions heard and even precipitating a crisis. This mistrust profoundly shapes the attitude of many in the military toward EU membership and the new reforms.

For the military, the issue of EU membership is very complicated. Traditionally, the legacy of Ataturk's modernism has been interpreted as Turkey joining the West or becoming part of the West. Hence, membership in the EU is sometimes viewed as the acid test of the fulfillment of Ataturk's legacy and reforms. This point was stressed by Deputy Chief of the Turkish General Staff General Büyükanıt at an international conference in Istanbul in May 2003. He said, "I state once again the views of the Turkish Armed Forces on this issue with capital letters; Turkish Armed Forces cannot be against the European Union because the European Union is the geo-political and geo-strategic ultimate condition for the realization of the target of modernization which Mustafa Kemal Ataturk chose for the Turkish nation."⁵⁰ In spite of these remarks, many observers think that there has also been considerable apprehension about meeting the Copenhagen political criteria in the ranks of the military.

Firstly, education and socialization in the military is centered on a deeply embedded distrust of the West and, by extension, the EU. Generations of officers have been formed with the belief that the West, in this case the Europeans and the United States, are imperialist and are driven with the desire to weaken and divide up Turkey. The reforms that are demanded from Turkey for pre-accession are evaluated from this perspective. Many in the military genuinely believe that the EU would never admit Turkey as a member. Hence, they consider at least some of the reforms as tools to weaken Turkey's national cohesion and sovereignty as well as its ability to defend secularism.⁵¹

Secondly, the military's view of international relations is very much steeped in *realpolitik*. International politics is viewed as an arena of power struggle in which the states that are militarily strong and cohesive stand a better chance of surviving. The notion that states can enter

into win-win cooperative relationships is utterly foreign. They may recognize that the EU has achieved a Kantian peace zone or a “security community” among its membership; however, they will simply not believe that Europeans would be prepared to include Turkey in such a system.

The frustration associated with the debate over EU membership and the intentions of the EU in seeking reforms in Turkey leads to tension that sometimes erupts into the limelight. A case in point is the virulent and surprising manner in which the Secretary-General of the National Security Council, General Tuncer Kiliç (at an international military conference in Istanbul in March 2002), declared that the EU was a “Christian Club” and that it was a “neo-colonialist force determined to divide Turkey.” He proposed that Turkey abandon its bid for EU membership and seek closer relations with Russia and Iran. His remarks precipitated a lively debate in Turkey.⁵² However, the next day a former president of Turkey, Süleyman Demirel, delivered a scathing criticism of the General’s argument verging on mockery. Then-Chief of the Turkish General Staff General Hüseyin Kivrikoglu, too, felt the need to reassure the public that General Kiliç had expressed his personal opinion but that for the military, membership in the EU was a “geostrategic” objective.⁵³

There are an abundance of examples indicative of the unrest in the higher ranks of the military. A similar situation occurred in January 2004, right at a time when the government was trying to get its new policy on Cyprus adopted. During the intra-bureaucracy negotiations, a story was leaked to the Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet* (known for its support of a hard-line position on Cyprus) that the military had come up with a plan for Cyprus that conflicted with the one prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵⁴ The story appeared at a time when there were critical internal discussions taking place to nudge Turkish policy toward supporting the Annan Plan—a highly controversial effort particularly among Euroskeptics and advocates of the status quo. The stories concerning divisions between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the military were immediately denied by the Office of the General Staff. Instead, the Chief of the Turkish General Staff declared that there were no differences within the state apparatus, and that stories alleging such differences were weakening Turkey’s hand.⁵⁵ This was also the case when the media was heavily engaged in a broader debate over the problem of Cyprus and its link to EU membership. Against this background, the Commander of the Third Army, General Tolon, made

a public statement that those who advocated policies amounting to an abandonment of the TRNC (“*ver kurtul*” was a slogan used by the advocates of the status quo in Cyprus and critical of those who supported the Annan Plan) were simply “traitors.”⁵⁶ His statements provoked a furor in the media as well as a public rebuke from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül. Once more, the office of the General Staff had to intervene. The General was summoned to Ankara for consultations and subsequently declared that he had been misunderstood and that the media had typically twisted his words.

These manifestations of unrest within the military are themselves signs of a painful transformation that is taking place in the Turkish state apparatus. However, recent developments suggest that the military, as well as other state agencies, is beginning to adjust to the new realities and that the transformation is being consolidated. There is a lot to be said about the success of the government in changing hearts and minds within the state apparatus and among Euroskeptics. Undoubtedly, the support that the government has received from parts of the general public and pro-EU groups within civil society has also been critical. Ironically, it is possible to include among the ranks of the Europhiles the military as well as prominent state officials. In spite of the nature of education and socialization in the military and the bureaucracy, neither institution is immune to the changes occurring within the country. Hence, some of the officer corps and bureaucrats are able to distance themselves from established wisdom and take positions closer to the ones advocated by Europhiles.

V. The EU and its Impact on Turkish Domestic Politics

One other critical factor in this process of transformation is the interaction between Turkey and the EU. In other words, what the EU does, how it handles Turkey, and the discourses it uses all have a significant impact on the debate between Europhiles and Euroskeptics in Turkey. The posture that the EU takes toward Turkey also impacts the government’s ability to persuade and mobilize various domestic constituencies in support of reforms. It plays a critical role in the balance between Europhiles and Euroskeptics in the domestic negotiation of pre-accession.

The more the EU has positively engaged Turkey, the more forthcoming the Turkish side has been in overcoming resistance and obstacles in the way of better EU-Turkish relations. Positive relations have tended

to strengthen the hand of Europhiles and the prospects of reform. Positive moves on the part of Turkey have, in turn, enabled the EU side to take steps supportive of Turkey's prospects of pre-accession and membership. In this case, it is possible to talk about iterations of interactions that resemble a virtuous circle—interactions that bring the two sides closer to each other while enabling the government and reform constituencies to tip the balance in their favor against the onslaught of Euroskeptics. In the course of the last two years it is possible to speak of such a virtuous circle in EU-Turkish relations. But this was not always the case.

The 1990s in general were characterized by poor relations and deep mistrust in EU-Turkish relations. Many EU member governments as well as the European parliament were critical of Turkey's human rights record and its handling of the violence surrounding the Kurdish problem.⁵⁷ Generally, the EU took the position that Turkey had to get its own house in order before its membership aspirations could be taken seriously. The EU's call for a political solution to the Kurdish problem and its advocacy of "minority rights" played into the hands of Euro-skeptics, who argued that the EU was only interested in weakening Turkey's territorial integrity. For example, in 1995, Süleyman Demirel reacted in an unusually forceful way to remarks made by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alain Juppé, that Turkey should find a political solution to the Kurdish problem. Demirel argued that Juppé's statement was unequivocal evidence of Western intentions to create a Kurdish state in Turkey.⁵⁸ The decision of the EU at its Luxembourg summit in 1997 to exclude Turkey from the list of candidate countries for the next round of enlargement aggravated the tension and mistrust between the EU and Turkey.

The first-ever report on Turkey that was prepared by the EC (in November 1998) provoked a negative reaction as well. The report assessed Turkey's progress toward pre-accession on the basis of the Copenhagen political criteria. It found Turkey wanting on all these criteria. Regarding the Kurdish problem, the report noted that, "Turkey will have to find a political and non-military solution to the problem."⁵⁹ The references to minority rights and the need for a political solution provoked criticism and even led to accusations of European aspirations to undermine Turkey's territorial integrity.⁶⁰ During an interview, President Demirel also expressed his discomfort over the need to meet the Copenhagen criteria on minority rights because of Turkey's genu-

ine fear of separatism. He argued that such criteria imposed on Turkey could complicate its prospects for membership in the EU.⁶¹

This negative climate in EU-Turkish relations began to change, and moves reinforcing cooperation and goodwill started to emerge in 1999. In February 1999, the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, was captured in Kenya. He was tried and convicted, receiving a death sentence in June of that year. The newly elected prime minister of Turkey, Bülent Ecevit, who was known for his lukewarm attitude toward the EU, became more supportive of EU membership. On the other hand, the new German social democrat government, led by Gerhard Schröder, also began to make statements much more accommodating of Turkey. Traditionally, the Germans had been the most conspicuous opponents of giving Turkey EU membership. Ecevit's commitment to political reforms in support of greater democracy, and the EU's positive response, brought the two sides much closer. In December 1999, Ecevit persuaded his coalition government, including the right-wing nationalist MHP, to respect a call by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) for a stay of execution on Öcalan's death sentence.

Turkey had accepted the right of its citizens to take complaints against Turkey to the ECHR in 1987, and since then had respected the Court's rulings. Öcalan's lawyers had complained to the ECHR that the ruling of the Turkish court was unjust. In an effort to review the complaint, the ECHR issued a stay of execution in November 1999.⁶² Respecting the ECHR's call was an extremely difficult and sensitive issue. Öcalan was seen by a large portion of the public as the culprit in years of death and destruction. Furthermore, the MHP had made it into the parliament as well as the coalition government on a ticket pledging that the death sentence of Öcalan would be carried through. After a contentious debate, the government decided to acquiesce to the ECHR call. This was taken by the EU, which required the lifting of the death penalty as a precondition for pre-accession, as a very positive and symbolically important gesture. It was a major contributing factor that opened the way to Turkish candidacy in December 1999.

A positive move from the EU came with the AP, reinforcing those circles in Turkey that advocated reforms and eventual EU membership. This document laid down a long list of economic, legal, and political reforms that Turkey had to introduce in order to meet the Copenhagen criteria. These included the adoption of cultural rights for minorities. However, in a marked departure from the progress report of 1998, the document shied away from using the term *minority*, a term whose use

on many occasions had marred EU-Turkish relations.⁶³ Instead, the framers of the EU document chose to use much more subtle, politically inoffensive and nuanced language. It called for lifting the restrictions that denied Turkish citizens the option to broadcast in their mother tongue. It also called for assisting cultural diversity and securing the cultural rights (including education in the mother tongue) of all Turkish citizens, irrespective of their origin. The wording clearly manifested a conscious effort to avoid the term *minority* and to emphasize cultural rather than minority rights. Indeed, this helped moderates disarm the arguments of hard-liners in Turkey. The lack of references to minority rights and political solutions, especially regarding the Kurds, meant that hard-liners could not argue their classic case based on the notion of the Sèvres syndrome. Furthermore, it became much more difficult to accuse moderates of being traitors. Undoubtedly, these developments were very significant in the adoption of the critical reforms in October 2001 and August 2002 that helped to diffuse the Kurdish problem.

Similar examples can also be offered from foreign policy issues independent of the Copenhagen political criteria. Since the adoption of the Treaty on the European Union in 1992, the EU has been striving to develop a common foreign and security policy. The Helsinki European Council summit was important not just for the decision on Turkey's candidacy but also because it called for the establishment of military capabilities that would give the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) some teeth. However, ESDP also required the prerogative of using NATO facilities. Turkey, a longstanding member of NATO, made it known that it would veto the use of such facilities unless it was included in the decision-making process.⁶⁴ The EU countries keen to have ESDP developed, such as France and Germany, resented Turkey's position and considered it an effort to stall European integration. Delicate negotiations pursued between the United States, Britain informally representing the EU, and Turkey culminated in a preliminary agreement in November 2001 that broke the deadlock over the use of NATO facilities. It has generally been recognized that Turkey's willingness to compromise played an important role in the invitation for Turkey to participate in the Convention on the Future of Europe, which would start in 2002 to draft a constitution for Europe.⁶⁵ Austria and Germany were known to have objected to Turkey's participation, and wanted to limit participation to countries that had already started pre-accession negotiations. The breakthrough on ESDP is cited as an important factor that helped tip the balance in favor of Turkey.

In Turkey, the decision reached at the Laeken summit in December 2001, in turn, helped make up for the deep resentment caused by the decision of the Nice summit in December 2000.⁶⁶ At this summit, the EU adopted the treaty that included institutional adjustments to be introduced with the next round of enlargement. No allowance was made for Turkey's membership. This was interpreted in Turkey, by the government as well as the public, as a sign that the EU was still not genuinely concerned about Turkish membership.

The actual breakthrough on ESDP did not arrive until the following year. Once the November compromise had been reached, Britain took the agreement to the EU. However, this time Greece objected to certain aspects of the agreement and demanded their modification. Turkey considered the matter closed and a deadlock developed. It was tough negotiations between the newly formed Turkish government and the military, on the one hand, and between Turkey and the EU, on the other, that eventually led to yet another compromise arrangement, just days before the December 2002 Copenhagen summit. Without this breakthrough, it is highly unlikely that Turkey would have received December 2004 as a clear date when the EU would decide whether or not to start negotiations for accession. The Copenhagen decision was a major disillusionment for the new government that had lobbied very hard for a clear and unequivocal date. Yet, retrospectively, this decision did provide incentive to the government as well as to the Europhiles to push for the remaining critical reforms. This was yet another example of the two sides adopting policies that helped to reinforce confidence and cooperation with each other.

One last but critical example of the influence of positive interactions between the EU and Turkey comes from January 2004. Romano Prodi became the first-ever president of the European Commission to visit Turkey during its more than 40-year-old relationship with the EU. Mr. Prodi stressed that a solution on Cyprus was *not* part of the Copenhagen political criteria that Turkey would be judged upon. The EU strategy paper adopted for Turkey, together with the 2003 progress report, had established a direct link between Turkey's prospects of obtaining a negotiation date and the solution of the Cyprus problem. A public furor had exploded in Turkey as a result, and the Turkish government tried hard to get the reference to Cyprus taken out of the strategy paper. In Turkey, commentaries argued that the linkage was yet another example of the EU raising the bar as Turkey got close to meeting the criteria.

In his speeches, Prodi made it very clear that the European Commission would base its judgment only on Turkey's performance in respect to the Copenhagen political criteria when making its recommendation to the European Council on whether Turkey should or should not be given a date.⁶⁷ He left little doubt that if Turkey continued its current performance, it would be very likely that the Commission would make a positive recommendation. He felt that the EU was duty bound to make such a recommendation if it was itself to live up to the Copenhagen criterion of respecting the "rule of law." However, he also stressed that the ultimate decision at the European Council would be political, and that what happened in respect to the Cyprus problem could influence that decision. His remarks coincided with a period when the government was painstakingly trying to reform Turkey's Cyprus policy.

At a summit meeting chaired by the president on 8 January, the decision to support the start of negotiations to find a solution to the Cyprus problem fell short of validating the Annan Plan. This was considered a sign that the hard-liners still prevailed. However, when the National Security Council meeting took place on the 23rd of January, the decision included the Annan Plan as a basis for negotiations. It was this final breakthrough that allowed the prime minister first to announce that Turkey was ready to negotiate on the basis of the Annan Plan at the Davos Economic Forum, and then called on President Bush to lend support for the negotiations. Prodi's visit and remarks occurred on January 15 and 16, right between these two critical summits about Cyprus. It would not be wrong to suggest that these remarks did make a positive contribution to the change that occurred between the first and the second vital meetings on Cyprus in Ankara. Once the results of the referenda on the Annan Plan emerged, EU governments and officials, such as Gunter Verheugen, praised the Turkish side and committed themselves to advocate and support policies that would improve the lot of Turkish Cypriots. This helped to legitimize the new Turkish policy in the eyes of domestic constituencies in Turkey.

The above list is well short of being comprehensive. It is only meant to illustrate the point that both parties' positive moves toward each other have reinforced a virtuous circle that has facilitated the task of the government in Turkey and the hand of the Europhiles in pushing reforms through and advocating a solution for Cyprus on the basis of the Annan Plan. This is not to mean that no negative moves have taken place. Both sides do make moves that weaken the hands of those who advocate stronger relations. The point, however, is that compared to

the past, the balance is a positive one and the mistrust has lessened. The EU is much more willing to make allowances for the occasional difficulties that the government faces in implementing some of the reforms. A notable case in point is the retrial of Leyla Zana and her colleagues.

The package of reforms that were adopted in February 2003 opened the way for the retrial. It is generally accepted that the new trial will lead to their acquittal, given the changes that were introduced to the very laws that led to their convictions. The EU has continuously called for their release from detention during the retrial. However, the court and the prosecutor's office have resisted. The government has also been unable to bring about their release. One of the retrial sessions took place on the very day that Romano Prodi was visiting Turkey. The European Commission offered to reconsider the date of his visit but the Turkish side deemed it unnecessary. In his address to the Turkish parliament on the day the court was due to meet, President Prodi recalled the importance that the EU attributed to the retrial of Zana and her colleagues, and to their continued detention. The court once more failed to ensure their release. Significantly, no crisis erupted in the relations of both sides. Both sides were much better at appreciating each other's difficulties and were willing to focus on the grander long-term objective. It is not surprising that in June 2004 this virtuous circle of interactions succeeded in bringing about an environment conducive to the release of Leyla Zana and her colleagues.

VI. Conclusion

Turkey is going through a massive transformation domestically as well as in terms of its foreign policy. It is generally recognized that at the pace at which the reforms and their implementation is moving, it is likely that the regular report of the European Commission will be positive, and that the Commission will finally recommend that negotiations do start. The remaining challenge for the government is to ensure that the reforms continue and that those in Turkey who resist membership do not derail the process. The breakthrough achieved on Cyprus removed the last possible card that those in the EU who oppose Turkish membership and their counterpart, the Turkish Euroskeptics, could use to block Turkey from receiving a starting date for the pre-accession process. The process leading to this drastic transformation of Turkey's domestic and foreign politics can be attributed, *ceteris paribus*,

to the dynamics of the domestic negotiation concerning the adoption of reforms to meet the Copenhagen criteria as well as to the nature of the interactions between Turkish and EU players.

The decision whether to give a date to Turkey will be a tough one for the EU. Once a candidate country starts accession negotiations, membership is considered to be merely a matter of time. There has not been a single case in which a country that started negotiations has not been admitted. Yet obviously there could always be a first case. Public opinion in Europe is wary of this round of enlargement. Support for enlargement polls below 50%, on average. Support for Turkey has been even less than that. Furthermore, there are many other factors, ranging from economic ones to the size and culture of Turkey, which work against the prospect of Turkish membership. Ultimately, though, a country's membership has been the prerogative of the leadership in the candidate countries and in EU member states. In Turkey's case, leadership will have to play an even greater role. Commentaries appearing in the European media seem to be increasingly receptive to Turkey's membership. Clearly, September 11 and the Iraqi crisis have played an important role. There is a growing appreciation in Europe of the importance of allowing Turkey membership in terms of the EU's ability to continue its mission to export peace and stability to an ever wider geographical area. Even more importantly, there is a recognition that a reformed Turkey, with its pluralist democracy and secularism, can constitute an example for the rest of the Middle East and the Muslim world, which are themselves on the brink of a major transformation.

For the last couple of years, the challenge of EU membership was always Turkey's challenge. Few in Europe believed that Turkey could meet the challenge. Many hid behind the belief that Turkey would never be able to meet the Copenhagen political criteria. This time the challenge is Europe's challenge. Will Europe be able to admit the centuries old "other" into its ranks? The EU succeeded in reconciling the rivalry and enmity between France and Germany. Most recently, it succeeded in overcoming the Cold War division in Europe. The outcome of the challenge will inevitably determine whether both sides succeed in achieving Turkey's integration into the EU and anchor Turkey into the realm of "democratic peace," as described in John O'Neal and Bruce Russett's *Triangulating Peace*. Or will they fail in that and provoke a polarization between Turkey and Europe of the kind envisaged in Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*? Or will events develop in such a manner that Turkey's reforms fail to gain root and Turkey drifts

into a state of “illiberal democracy,” as speculated by Zakaria Fareed in *The Future of Freedom?*

Epilogue⁶⁸

After two days of nerve-wracking negotiations, political brinkmanship, and typical European Union style diplomacy, the European Council (the highest governing body of the EU, representing 25 member countries) decided to open membership negotiations with Turkey on 3 October 2005.⁶⁹ This recent summit had been preceded by a bitter debate in Europe on Turkey’s eligibility for membership and its “Europeanness.” The resolution of the Cyprus problem also loomed as an insurmountable obstacle in front of Turkey. Nevertheless, with an unprecedented will by Turkish standards, the current government proceeded with the adoption of the remaining critical political reforms. The *Progress Report* on Turkey prepared by the European Commission acknowledged Turkey’s successes and concluded that Turkey had sufficiently met the Copenhagen political criteria. It went on to recommend that negotiations could be opened with Turkey “without delay,” as soon as some remaining reforms were completed.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül, received a hero’s welcome upon their return from the European Council summit. Most of the media chose to emphasize the “full” part of the glass and termed the outcome a “success.” Yet, there are also many in Turkey and Europe who highlight the “empty” part of the glass or at best have received the decision with mixed feelings. This is a function of the recognition that Turkey’s road to membership remains paved with a multitude of challenges, if not obstacles. Some of these challenges actually stem from the “buts” and qualifications that have been built into the decision to open the accession talks while another set stems from Europe and Turkey itself. Yet, these challenges or difficulties cannot hide the fact that the European Council is heralding a new era for both Europe and Turkey, with potential repercussions for the regions beyond. These give the decision a historic quality. ●

Notes

1. Please see the Epilogue for the decision of the European Council of December 2004.
2. At the Copenhagen European Council summit in June 1993, the criteria for future membership in the European Union was determined as: 1) stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and the protection of minorities; 2) existence of a functioning market economy, as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU; and 3) ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic, and monetary union. The first set is known as the “political criteria” and candidate countries are required to have met them in order to start accession negotiations. Each autumn, the European Commission prepares progress reports in respect to these criteria. It is at the recommendation of the Commission that the European Council decides whether a candidate can start negotiations, and whether at the conclusion of these negotiations it can be admitted as a member country. For membership to take place, the approval of the European Parliament is required as well as that of the national parliaments. Some member countries may also hold referenda.
3. Putnam 1988.
4. Lewis 2002; Ahmad 1993.
5. Hale 2000, p. 57.
6. Karluk 1996; Eralp 1997; Balkir and Williams 1993; Önis 2000; and Tekeli and Ilkin 1993 and 2000.
7. Arat and Baykal in Oran 2001, p. 326; Hale 2000, pp. 174–179 and 233–245. See also, Atila Eralp, “Turkey and the EC in the Changing Post-War International System,” in *Turkey and Europe*, ed. Canan Balkir and Allan M. Williams (London: Pinter, 1993); and Atila Eralp, “Turkey and the European Community: Prospects for a New Relationship,” in *The Political and Socioeconomic Transformation of Turkey*, ed. Atila Eralp, Muharrem Tunay, and Birol Yesilada (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996).
8. Kirisci and Winrow 1997; Kirisci 2004.
9. Klauss 2000.
10. Arat and Baykal in Oran 2001, p. 341.
11. Buzan and Diez 1999; Müftüleri-Bac 1998.
12. Rumford 2000; Nicolaidis 2001.
13. The German Ambassador in Ankara reported that this letter played an important role in swaying Schröder’s opinion, *Turkish Daily News* (9 December 1999).
14. Heraclides 2002; Önis 2001; Rumelili 2003.
15. Commission of the European Communities 2001.
16. Udum 2002; Buharali 2002.
17. Avci 2002, p. 101. The website for the Convention is www.europa.eu.int/futurum/index_en.htm.
18. Avci 2003.
19. Many of these e-mail messages were subsequently published in Perinçek 2002.
20. Önis 2003, pp. 19–21; Kirisci and Capan 2004, pp. 183–186.
21. Çarkoglu 2003.

22. Çarkoglu 2002.
23. "If the European Council in December 2004, on the basis of a report and a recommendation from the Commission, decides that Turkey fulfills the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay." See Copenhagen European Council, 12–13 December 2002, Presidency Conclusions, online at <http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/makeFrame.asp?MAX=&BID=76&DID=73774&LANG=1&File=/pressData/en/ec/73774.pdf&Picture=0>.
24. *Report of the Secretary-General on his Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus* (S/2003/398, 1 April 2003). Online at <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/305/59/PDF/N0330559.pdf?OpenElement>.
25. For details of all the reforms, see Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretariat General for EU Affairs: *Political Reforms in Turkey*. Online at <http://www.euturkey.org.tr/abportal/content.asp?CID=6220&VisitID={C68EE18C-FE45-464D-B02D-75A8078AC0D7}>. For an assessment of these reforms, see TESEV: http://www.tesev.org.tr/ab_izleme/aranapor.php.
26. *2003 Regular Report on Turkey's Progress towards Accession*. Commission of the European Communities 2003. Online at http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report_2003/pdf/rr_tk_final.pdf.
27. "Turkey: 2000 Accession Partnership," online at <http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int/english/turkey2000ap.rtf>.
28. Avci 2003.
29. NPAA 2001.
30. Turkey: 2000 Accession Partnership, Commission of the European Communities, 2000, online at <http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int/english/turkey2000ap.rtf>.
31. NPAA 2001.
32. Op. Cit., p. 20.
33. Hale 2003, p. 13.
34. National Program for the Adoption of the *Acquis* (NPAA 2003). Online at <http://www.abgs.gov.tr/up2003/up.htm>. The Accession Partnership Document of 2003 (Council Decision of 19 May 2003) is available online at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/adc/AccessionPartnership2003.pdf>.
35. The European Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, "EP Oosterland Report" (17 March 2004).
36. See <http://www.cyprus-un-plan.org> for the Annan Plan.
37. Helsinki European Council, 10–11 December 1999, Presidency Conclusions, Paragraph 9b. Online at http://europa.eu.int/council/off/conclu/dec99/dec99_en.htm.
38. *2003 Regular Report on Turkey's Progress towards Accession*. Online at http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report_2003/pdf/rr_tk_final.pdf.
39. For example, see the remarks by the European Commission Commissioner responsible for Enlargement, Gunter Verheugen, "Verheugen: Kararsiziz," *Radikal* (28 October 2003).
40. For an example of such a survey, see European Union Survey: "Turkish Public Opinion on the European Union," Research Team: Ali Çarkoglu, Refik Erzan, Kemal Kirisci, Hakan Yilmaz (2003). Online at <http://www.tesev.org.tr/eng/project/fullreport.php>. See

also McLaren and Müftüler-Bac (2003) for a survey of the views of members of the Turkish parliament on the EU.

41. These ideas have been closely associated with MHP but have not been limited to them. An influential member of CHP and a former permanent secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Onur Öymen, has been closely associated with these ideas and developed them in O. Öymen, *Türkiye'nin Gücü (Turkey's Power)* (Istanbul: AD Kitapçılık, 1998).

42. Çarkoglu 2003, p. 174, Table 1.

43. For reactions to Öymen's remarks from within his Party, see "CHP: Biz MHP gibi degiliz," *Radikal* (14 February 2004). For an example of Baykal's remarks on Cyprus, see *Milliyet* (25 March 2004), online at: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2004/03/25/>. For an elaborate assessment of CHP's attitude toward the EU and the question of Cyprus, see interview with Hasan Bülent Kahraman by Nese Düzel, *Radikal* (8 March 2004).

44. Çarkoglu Op. Cit.

45. At its peak, there were thirteen provinces under this law that gave sweeping powers to the authorities and suspended a range of basic civil rights. The law, originally introduced in 1987, was lifted progressively. The last ones to be lifted were Hakkari and Tunceli on 30 July 2002. Information obtained from http://www.ohal.gov.tr/f_tarihce.htm.

46. Turkish Armed Forces. Online at <http://www.tsk.mil.tr/genelkumay/bashalk/aciklama/2002/a08.htm>.

47. Sakkalioglu 1997; Jenkins 2001.

48. *Radikal* (27 January 2004). For an assessment of the role of the military as well as other actors in the decision to get negotiations started, see commentary by Murat Yetkin, "Çözüm yolu nasıl açıldı?" *Radikal* (15 February 2004).

49. *Milliyet* (16 February 2004).

50. Büyükanıt 2003.

51. The notion that the international community is conspiring to undermine the territorial integrity of Turkey is a widely shared point of view and is often associated with the notion of the "Sèvres syndrome." It is the belief that the international community and in particular the Western world aspire to revive the terms of the Sèvres Treaty imposed on the Ottoman Empire after the end of the First World War. The Treaty would have divided up the geography corresponding to today's Turkey between Armenia, Kurdistan, and Greece, as well as zones occupied by the victorious powers. This never happened because Turkey, unlike the other losers of the First World War, succeeded in having the Lausanne Treaty signed in July 1923.

52. For the controversial remarks of the General and brief coverage of this debate, see Avci 2003, p. 164.

53. For the reporting of some of the reactions, see "Askerden iki sürpriz," *Milliyet* (8 March 2002).

54. See Mustafa Balbay, *Cumhuriyet* (7 January 2004), which included a xeroxed copy of the internal document alleging the differences. For commentaries about the debate on "divisions," see Murat Yetkin, "Kıbrıs zirvesi, hükümet ve Genelkurmay," *Radikal* (8 January 2004), and İsmet Berkan, "TSK'dan iki eğilim ve Kıbrıs," *Radikal* (9 January 2004).

55. "Medya üzerinden Kıbrıs 'savaş'ları," *Radikal* (6 January 2004).

56. "Ülke hain yetistiriyor," *Milliyet* (18 January 2004).
57. Kirisci 2004.
58. *Turkish Daily News* (10 May 1995).
59. *Regular Report from the Commission on Progress towards Accession: Turkey*. Brussels: European Commission, November 1998.
60. See, for example, the commentary by Mehmet Ali Kislali, "Sèvres Korkusu," *Radikal* (12 December 1998). For a general review of reactions to the report and a more moderate approach, see the commentary by a retired ambassador, Ilter Türkmen, "AB Raporuna Tepki," *Radikal* (13 November 1998).
61. *Radikal* (4 February 1999).
62. "Apo dosyasında kritik gün," *Milliyet* (30 November 1999).
63. For a description of the sensitivities towards the term *minority* and its specific meanings in the Turkish context, see Kirisci and Winrow 1997, pp. 45–49.
64. Buharali 2002; Udum 2002; Çayhan 2003.
65. Avci 2002, p. 101.
66. See "Ankara'ya Laeken dopingi," *Milliyet* (12 December 2001) for Ecevit's statements on the issue. Online at <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2001/12/16/dunya/dun01.html>.
67. His speech to the Turkish Grand National Assembly can be accessed online at <http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int/romanoprodi-tr.html>.
68. For a more detailed analysis of the European Council summit on Turkey, see K. Kirisci, "The December 2004 European Council on Turkey: Is it a Historic Decision?" *Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA)* 8, no. 4 (December 2004).
69. Croatia was given 17 March 2005 for opening its accession negotiations with the EU, conditional upon the Croatian government turning in remaining indictees to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The text for the *Presidency Conclusions* for the European Council meeting on 16–17 December 2004 can be found online at http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/83201.pdf.

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