

Turkey at a Crossroads: Preserving Ankara's Western Orientation

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On October 3, after weeks of intense negotiations and missed deadlines, Turkey began accession talks with the European Union -- a milestone in its two-century quest to become a full-fledged member of the Western world. Yet, Turkish public attitudes continue to vacillate between the West and the Muslim world. The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, combined with the rise of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, have created strong feelings of solidarity between Turks and their Muslim neighbors, including Syria and Iran. At the same time, Turkish attitudes toward the United States and Europe have become increasingly negative. Many Turks are angry about both the Iraq war and U.S. inaction against increased PKK terrorist activity. Likewise, their euphoria over possible EU membership is quickly winding down as Brussels places unprecedented obstacles in the path of Turkish accession.

Why is Turkey undergoing such a dramatic transformation? How far might Turkey move away from the West? Perhaps most important, what should Washington do to prevent this slide? In this new Policy Focus, Washington Institute senior fellow Soner Cagaptay examines these and other key questions, assessing the potential consequences of Turkey facing poor relations with both of its principal Western partners for the first time in modern history. Throughout, he outlines the various security, economic, and diplomatic measures that Washington can take to preserve its partnership with one of the Western world's greatest allies in the region.

• 32 pages

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