

# German and French Leaders' Views on Turkey's EU Membership

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## Brief Analysis

In December 2004, the European Union (EU) invited Turkey to begin accession talks for membership in October 2005, stating that Ankara had met its accession rules “sufficiently enough” to do so. On June 29, the European Commission is expected to ratify the first draft of a technical framework that lays down procedures for the future negotiations. Despite this decision, objections to Turkish membership have increased within the EU. Following is a sampling of views among political leaders in Germany and France, two countries regarded as the motor of the EU.

### GERMANY

Both Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer of the Social Democrat Party (SPD)–Greens coalition support Turkish accession. Yet, opposition Christian Democrat Party (CDU) leader Angela Merkel and her ally Edmund Stoiber of the Christian Social Union (CSU), who hope to unseat Schroeder and Fischer in the September 2005 elections, adamantly oppose Ankara’s membership.

#### CDU/CSU: ‘Privileged Partnership,’ Not Accession

“I don’t believe that Turkey can become a member of the union in the foreseeable future. Negotiating a privileged partnership is a way to keep close ties between Turkey and the EU.” —Angela Merkel, Deutsche Welle, February 16, 2004 “I know that the Union has also made promises before. But this is a case for the good words of historian Heinrich August Winkler, according to which promises must also be judged based on the circumstances under which they were made. The intensification of the Union, for which we are striving, could not be put into effect this way. That is why we are urging a privileged partnership with Turkey and not full membership.” —Angela Merkel, *Suddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), December 16, 2004 (translation by Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS])

“We will do everything possible to achieve a privileged partnership with Turkey instead of EU accession. . . . The country is a close partner of Germany and should remain so. That is no reason, however, to offer membership in the EU. Should the EU also admit Morocco and Tunisia, which also want to join?” —Edmund Stoiber, *Der Spiegel*, May 6, 2005 (translation by FBIS)

“Europe’s basic freedoms should also be extended to [Turkey]: free movement of goods, greater freedom for the movement of individuals, freedom of provision of services, free movement of capital. And Turkey should also be fully integrated into the common foreign and security policy.” —Edmund Stoiber, *Suddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), December 16, 2004 (translation by FBIS)

#### SPD/Greens: Yes to Accession

“The privileged partnership can [meet] neither the subject developments nor the promises given to Turkey.” —Gerhard Schroeder, *Hurriyet* (Ankara), February 20, 2004 (translation by FBIS)

“The EU might shut the doors on Turkey; however, this could come at a tremendous cost. An alternative option for Turkey to become a Western society poses either a crisis or worse.” —Joschka Fischer, *Guardian* (London), June 15,

2004

### Turkey's Identity

“Christian Democrats have no desire to close the door on Turkey . . . and the CDU does not see the EU as a club of Christians. . . . Turkey does not fit into the EU because it is ‘culturally different.’” —Angela Merkel, Deutsche Welle, February 16, 2004

“Much will depend on what path Turkey chooses for itself. . . . [I]t’s not about religion. But it does play a role that Islam had not experienced the Enlightenment.” —Angela Merkel, *Suddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), December 16, 2004 (translation by FBIS) “Turkey is not a European country. . . . With a state like Turkey, with an utterly different social background, the political union would collapse.” —Edmund Stoiber, *Suddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), December 16, 2004 (translation by FBIS)

### Promises, History, and Security

“There are two reasons for us to vote in favor of Turkey. Turkey has been promised for forty years that if it fulfills political criteria, membership talks will start. Promises should be kept in international politics. The second reason is regional circumstances. We all see how unstable the Middle East and Asia are. . . . Turkey had a unique situation in the region as regards Europe’s interests.” —Gerhard Schroeder, *Anatolia* (Ankara), October 5, 2004 (translation by FBIS)

“Both opponents and proponents of entry question the strategic meaning of Turkey for the security of Europe. There is agreement today that Turkey still has a long transformation process that requires some European assistance. The difference in the two opinions lies in whether a full membership is granted in the end or Turkey is given something that already exists today, a privileged partnership, thus no full membership. The EU can decide this only when a Europeanized Turkey has developed. There are decisions that cannot be made today. Moreover, there is no automatism to its entry. I would not understand why one would drop this idea, for it deals with European security.” —Joschka Fischer, *www.welt.de*, June 9, 2005 (translation by The Washington Institute [TWI])

“We want a special partnership, a third way with Turkey, because for security and geopolitical reasons it is very important for us to have very close relations with Turkey.” —Angela Merkel, *Deutsche Welle*, February 16, 2004

### FRANCE

French president Jacques Chirac has generally maintained his cautious support for Turkey’s EU membership, even after his country’s May 29 vote against the EU constitution. Yet, Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy—a rising force in French politics, leader of the governing Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), and a likely contender for Chirac’s position in 2007—has strongly opposed accession. The opposition Socialist Party (PS) remains split on the issue.

#### ‘No’ to the EU Constitution Equals ‘No’ to Turkey?

“Lie: to say ‘no’ to the constitution is to say ‘no’ to Turkey’s accession to the EU. Of all the current lies, this probably takes the prize. This is because there is no connection, either in law or in fact, between these two issues. And rightly so: the text of the European constitution concerns only the twenty-five EU member countries and contains nothing that relates specifically to Turkey.” —Foreign Minister Michel Barnier, *Le Monde*, March 30, 2005 (translation by FBIS)

“Without the [constitutional] treaty it seems difficult to me to add new member states.” —Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy (replaced Michel Barnier on June 2 following the referendum on the EU constitution) *Financial Times*, June 14, 2005

### Turkey's Identity and Role

“Turkey is a country close to Europe, an important country, which has genuine elite, but it is not a European country.” —Former president Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, *Le Monde*, June 8, 2004 (translation by FBIS)

“Is it in our interest for Turkey, in future generations, to lean toward Europe or toward Asia? I would say that it’s in our interest for it to lean toward Europe, toward our values or concept of human rights, peace, and democracy, and not toward Asia where it would be liable to take another path that would probably generate instability or insecurity for Europe.” —Jacques Chirac, interview with TF1 Television (France), December 15, 2004

“Europe has nothing to gain from having to apply the solidarity clause to Turkey that is far from having resolved its disputes with its neighbors. It will gain nothing from moving its borders to the limits of Asia.” —Robert Badinter (PS senator), *Le Monde*, October 12, 2004 (translation by FBIS)

“Turkey alone represents the equivalent of the entry of the ten new Eastern European countries combined—that’s quite something. Turkey means 71 million inhabitants—looking ahead to 2050, it will be 100 million, and given the new voting rules in the constitution, it would be the country with the most votes.” —Nicolas Sarkozy, BBC, September 27, 2004

‘Special Status’ or Eventual Membership?

“Turkey must not get the impression that it was being rejected. . . . It is not a question of rejecting the Turks, but on the contrary, to associate them with us as partners on the military, political, and economic level. . . . There are two ways of associating [Turkey] to us: either by the status of social partner with Europe—which is rather my own thinking—or you integrate it, which is rather what I don’t want.” —Nicolas Sarkozy, BBC, September 27, 2004

[Describing a “third hypothesis” with regard to Turkish membership:] “a tie strong enough to be consistent with our ambitions of peace and cooperation, without constituting accession to the EU.” —Jacques Chirac, *Le Monde*, November 26, 2004 (translation by FBIS)

“I am in favor of a privileged partnership with [Turkey], but not a membership. First, there is the problem of democracy. . . . [Referring to EU financial aid to Turkey] Our regions would no longer have any financial support. . . . [Turkey] would have 20 percent more votes [in the EU] than France would.” —Laurent Fabius (PS deputy), *Agence France Press*, November 2, 2004 (translation by TWI)

“That country’s EU membership negotiations have in any case not yet begun, and will only begin under strict conditions: has the launch of negotiations on Croatia not just been postponed, all the conditions set by Europe having not been met?” —Michel Barnier, *Le Monde*, March 30, 2005 (translation by FBIS)

“Asking a country like Turkey, a great country rich in history, to make such a considerable effort to reach an uncertain or partial result is obviously not reasonable. And we would be assuming a very weighty responsibility as far as history is concerned if, after being told by the people of a nation, ‘We will adopt all your values, all your rules, all your objectives,’ we responded, ‘Well, no. In the end, we’re going to be negative.’” —Jacques Chirac, interview with TF1 Television (France), December 15, 2004

“Let’s not make [Turkey] an issue. . . . It is not a matter of the present. So, let’s have principles here too and respect our commitments, Turkey is a candidate country, the conditions are not present, negotiations will start later.” —François Hollande (first secretary of PS), *France 2 Television*, May 5, 2004 (translation by TWI)

Referendum on Turkish Accession?

“[A decision] as important as Turkey entering Europe could only be taken after there had been a referendum in France, to know what the opinion of the French people is.” —Nicholas Sarkozy, BBC, September 27, 2004

“If Turkey’s accession were to become a real prospect, it would first be put to the French people in another

referendum.” —Michel Barnier, Le Monde, March 30, 2005 (translation by FBIS)

“The negotiations are state-to-state. . . . Each nation, and notably France, retains the right to stop everything, from the beginning of the talks to their end; that is for the ten, fifteen, twenty years it takes.” —Jacques Chirac, interview with TF1 Television (France), December 15, 2004

Nuray Nazli Inal is an intern, and Düden Yegenoglu is a research assistant, in The Washington Institute’s Turkish Research Program. ❖

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