



Turkey at a Crossroads

Preserving Ankara's Western Orientation

Soner Cagaptay

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Front cover: A Turkish woman pushes a stroller past a billboard in Ankara showing the red and white Turkish flag blending with the blue and yellow flag of the European Union. A photograph of Kemal Ataturk, founder of modern Turkey, is at left. The billboard message, which translates as “This star will go very well here,” was posted ahead of a December 2004 EU summit in Brussels regarding whether to begin accession talks with Turkey. Copyright AP Wide World Photos/Burhan Ozbilici

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Executive Summary

DESPITE TURKEY'S RECENTLY launched membership talks with the European Union (EU), Turkish euphoria over accession faces serious challenges in 2005–2006. This heightened pessimism is due largely to the EU's increasing recalcitrance toward Ankara's candidacy. Although Brussels stated in December 2004 that Turkey had "sufficiently" fulfilled its accession criteria and was eligible to open accession negotiations, several prominent EU leaders are now opposed to granting Turkey membership, despite the fact that accession talks with all previous candidates have resulted in membership offers. Tough EU demands—including sensitive items such as recognition of Greek Cyprus—have only exacerbated the resultant Turkish resentment toward the union. Many Turks believe that the EU is treating their accession candidacy differently from others out of condescension. This growing perception could spark a nationalist backlash in Turkey, leading to a rupture in Turkish-EU relations.

The deterioration of Turkish-EU ties would not be so alarming if Ankara's ties with its other principal Western partner, the United States, were in good shape. Today, most Turks blame Washington for renewed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) violence emanating from northern Iraq. Despite stabilization in bilateral ties after the immediate fallout of the Iraq war, various Turkish political forces are now coalescing in opposition to U.S. inaction against the PKK.

In addition, the Iraq war has engendered an even more serious threat to U.S.-Turkish relations: a shift in Turkish attitudes toward the Muslim Middle East. For decades, Turkey looked to the West for political and economic cues. That changed, however, as a result of the war, which angered every significant political group in Turkey, from Islamists to leftists to nationalists. Although the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government's vigorous criticism of the war has dissipated, persistent media branding of Iraqis as friends and Americans as occupiers of a fellow Muslim country has strengthened Turk-

ish sympathies for the former, particularly the Sunni Arab community.

A sort of Muslim nationalism is now emerging in Turkey, pushing the country toward the Muslim world. Many Turks want to pursue closer ties with Syria and Iran in particular. Indeed, for the first time since World War II, most Turks seem comfortable with the notion of having neither the United States nor Europe as a major foreign policy partner.

In light of these factors, Washington has ample cause for concern about Ankara's future direction. Given the likely dearth of near-term European engagement in preserving Turkey's Western orientation—it will likely take years for the EU to recognize the wisdom of admitting Turkey into the union—the United States must take an active interest in this matter.

In order to win back Turkey's heart, Washington should focus on secular Turks. If the United States can regain the favor of this constituency—prominent among the bureaucracy and military and representing a majority of the Turkish population, both left and right—then minority Islamists will either follow along or fold before the challenge of fighting the mainstream in determining the country's orientation.

The surest way for Washington to reach Turkey's majority nationalists is by addressing the issue that they feel most strongly about: the PKK. If not handled properly, this issue could turn the full ire of the Turkish public toward the United States, particularly if growing PKK violence expands into metropolitan western Turkey. In addition to law enforcement measures (e.g., coordinating with the EU to target PKK front organizations and financial assets in Europe), the best short-term method of fighting the organization is by targeting its leadership based in northern Iraq. The PKK is more hierarchical than most terrorist groups, composed of a limited number of leadership cadres (who excel at finding allies, funds, and recruits) overseeing fighters who lack proficiency in such functions. Rather than launching a full-scale war on the PKK, the United States can paralyze it by helping to capture its

leaders, such as when Turkey captured Abdullah Ocalan with U.S. assistance in 1999.

In addition to action against the PKK, Washington has a less costly option for swaying Turkish public opinion: Cyprus. Prior to the April 2004 UN-supported referendum on the island's unification, Washington and Brussels declared that they would end the isolation of Turkish Cypriots if they supported the unification plan, which they did. Although Greek Cypriots have forced the EU to renege on its promise to Turkish Cypriots, the United States is free to fulfill its own commitment and ease their humanitarian difficulties. With some creative thinking, Washington can also use the Turkish Cypriot situation to close a bitter chapter in U.S.-Turkish relations.

The United States has already taken several constructive steps toward this end. For example, an American trade delegation visited Turkish Cyprus on February 17, 2005, and a subsequent May 31 visit by U.S. congressmen was such a successful public diplomacy move that even Turkey's Islamist and conservative press praised Washington. Additional helpful measures could include establishing direct flights to and from Turkish Cyprus, facilitating trade and cul-

tural ties, and expanding U.S. political contacts with Turkish Cypriots.

In addition to confidence-building measures related to the PKK and Cyprus, Washington should also focus on developing a solid bilateral agenda with Ankara like that seen in the 1990s. Such an agenda would help ensure that the relationship is able to handle any future crisis. Finally, as Ankara's EU accession negotiations unfold, both the American and Turkish policy elite should emphasize the shared values between Turks, Americans, and the wider Western world, highlighting Turkey's unique status as a secular, Muslim-majority democracy with strong ties to the West.

The sooner these actions are taken, the better the prospects for preserving the U.S.-Turkish relationship. Some may suggest that action on, for example, the PKK issue need not be carried out immediately, and that Washington should instead give priority to fighting the Iraqi insurgency. Yet, it would be a great irony if the United States lost Turkey while trying to hold on to Iraq. Dangerously shorn as it is of Middle Eastern allies, Washington cannot afford further deterioration in its relations with a country that has long been one of the Western world's greatest allies in the region.

Introduction

ON OCTOBER 3, 2005, after weeks of intense negotiations and missed deadlines, Turkey began accession talks with the European Union (EU). These talks represent a milestone in Turkey's two-century quest to become a full-fledged member of the Western world. Currently, Turkish public attitudes are vacillating 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 in November 2002, created strong feelings of solidarity between Turkey and its Muslim neighbors. Many Turks—not only suspect Islamists, but even some diehard secular politicians—have called on Ankara to establish closer ties with Syria and Iran. As recently as a few years ago, such suggestions would have seemed far-fical in the context of the staunchly Western-oriented Turkish political landscape.

Against this trend of Muslim solidarity, Turkish attitudes toward the United States and Europe have become increasingly negative. Regarding anti-American sentiment, the Iraq war is the crux of the problem. For example, according to a 2004 poll, one-third of all Turks identified the United States as the greatest threat to world peace, likely reflecting their anger over the war.¹

In addition, most Turks blame Washington for renewed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) violence emanating from northern Iraq, where the terrorist group is based. The U.S. military is technically in charge of that region, and PKK activity there constitutes a grave threat to U.S.-Turkish relations. Despite stabilization in bilateral ties after the immediate fallout of the war, various Turkish political forces are

now coalescing in opposition to U.S. inaction on this problem. Joint talks have not mitigated Turkish resentment toward Washington, primarily due to a spike in PKK attacks in summer 2005.²

On the European front, Turkish euphoria over possible EU membership is quickly winding down, despite the fact that accession talks have finally begun. Although Turkish political parties that rallied on a pro-EU platform received 83 percent of the vote in the November 2002 elections, public support for the EU had dropped to 59 percent by spring 2005.³ The EU itself is to blame for this trend. On December 17, 2004, the EU stated that Turkey had “sufficiently” fulfilled its accession criteria and was eligible “to open accession negotiations.”⁴ Yet, whereas accession talks with all previous candidate countries have resulted in EU membership offers, several prominent European powers are now opposed to granting Turkey membership even after talks are completed. For example, the Austrian government, with French support, recently suggested that Turkey not be given full membership. Many Turks believe that EU politicians are raising the bar for Turkish accession out of condescension.

Turkish-EU relations will likely take a further nosedive during the accession talks themselves. Tough EU demands—including sensitive items such as recognition of Greek Cyprus—will exacerbate Turkish resentment, and the union's general recalcitrance toward Ankara will only amplify this effect.⁵ The resultant nationalist backlash in Turkey could lead Ankara to abandon its pursuit of EU membership entirely.

1. Yusuf Ziya Özcan and İhsan Dağı, “NATO ve Türk Dış Politikası Araştırması,” *Pollmark Araştırma* (Ankara), July 2004, p. 35.
2. “PKK'dan tren bombalı saldırı,” *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), July 2, 2005 (available online at www.hurriyetim.com.tr/haber/0,,sid~1@w~2@tarix~2005-07-02-m@nvid~598915,00.asp); “Explosion in Cesme Injures 21,” *Zaman Online*, July 11, 2005 (available at www.zaman.com/?hn=21601&bl=national).
3. Executive Summary of the National Report for Turkey, *Standard Eurobarometer* 63 (Spring 2005). Available online (http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63_exec_tr.pdf).
4. Presidency Conclusions from the meeting of the Council of the European Union, Brussels, December 16–17, 2004. Available online (<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=DOC/04/6&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>).
5. For example, one French proposal reportedly went so far as to suggest that Turkey be linked to the EU as an overseas territory, much like the former Danish colony Greenland (author interview with a Turkish financial markets analyst, September 15, 2005).

With Turkish-EU ties deteriorating, two other factors will be important in determining Turkey's political orientation throughout 2005–2006:

- **New challenges for the weakened U.S.-Turkish relationship.** Bilateral ties have stabilized on a cordial, if low, plateau since Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's February 2005 visit to Ankara and subsequent visits to Washington by Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and foreign minister Abdullah Gul. Nevertheless, many wildcard issues remain, including PKK violence, crises concerning Syria and Iran, Iraqi Kurdish autonomy, Kirkuk's problematic political future, and U.S. operations against insurgents in the northern Iraqi city of Tal Afar, which has a majority Turkmen population.
- **Potential Turkish indifference toward the West.** For the first time since World War II, most Turks seem comfortable with the notion of having neither the United States nor Europe as a major foreign

policy partner. Accordingly, even if Turkey's political culture remains Western, growing sympathy for the Muslim world is inching Turks closer to their Muslim neighbors, especially Syria and Iran.

If the weighty scenario implied by these two factors is borne out, Turkey would have poor relations with both the United States and the EU for the first time in modern history. Governance by the AKP—an Islamist-pedigree party that calls itself a conservative democratic movement—has not harmed Turkish secularism or democracy, two qualities that make the country unique among Muslim-majority states. Yet, Turkey's third uncommon attribute—its ability to maintain strong ties with the West—faces serious challenges in 2005–2006. Why is Turkey undergoing such a dramatic transformation? Which factors are most likely to derail Ankara's relationships with the United States and EU, and how far might Turkey move away from the West? Finally, what should Washington do to prevent this slide? The following sections attempt to answer each of these questions in detail.

Turkish Accession: Objections versus Benefits

IN MANY RESPECTS, Turkey's mindset is starkly different from what it was on December 16, 2004, the eve of the EU's decision to invite Ankara to accession talks. First and foremost is the change in Turkish-EU relations. By late 2004, Ankara's relationship with Brussels was upbeat—almost surreally so, in fact, given the poor state of bilateral ties in the 1990s.¹

In December 1997, the EU had rejected Ankara's application for membership. In the words of Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker of Luxembourg, the EU president at the time, "It cannot be that the representatives of a country in which torture is still going on can sit at the table of the European Union."² This attitude generated widespread Turkish consternation toward the union.

In December 1999, faced with continuing Turkish backlash and extensive U.S. lobbying on behalf of Ankara, the EU dramatically changed its position. Brussels accepted Turkey to candidacy and promised to treat its application in the same manner as applications from other candidates.³ When the EU subsequently began demonstrating that it took Turkey's accession prospects seriously, Ankara in turn began to take the idea of EU membership seriously. This development opened up the political floodgates in Turkey, enabling reform initiatives that had been politically impossible in the past. Soon thereafter, Ankara began to carry out a number of these dramatic domestic reforms (e.g.,

facilitating Kurdish-language education and broadcasting) in an effort to increase democratic liberalization and qualify for accession.⁴

Back to Business As Usual

Today, the picture has changed dramatically. The EU no longer appears to be taking Turkish accession seriously. Despite the fact that Europe still accounts for around half of Turkish foreign trade, bilateral relations are once again in flux, largely because the EU is treating Turkey differently from other candidate countries.⁵ This attitude first became pronounced during the December 2004 negotiations, when the Turkish contingent received a hardnosed rebuff from the Europeans behind closed doors.⁶ Even publicly, the EU suggested that accession talks with Turkey would be an "open-ended" process "whose outcome cannot be guaranteed,"⁷ despite the fact that talks with all previous candidates were time-delimited and resulted in accession.

More recently, Brussels explicitly decoupled Turkey's accession process from that of other candidates, declaring that "negotiations will be based on Turkey's own merits, and the pace will depend on Turkey's progress in meeting the requirements for membership."⁸ This decoupling has manifested itself in a number of substantive and bureaucratic hurdles applied solely to Turkey. For example, the EU saddled Ankara with membership

1. Soner Cagaptay, "Where Goes the U.S.-Turkish Relationship?" *Middle East Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (Fall 2004), p. 43.
2. Stephen Kinzer, "Turkey, Rejected, Will Freeze Ties to European Union," *New York Times*, December 15, 1997. Available online (www-personal.umd.umich.edu/~mtwomey/newspapers/1215turk.html).
3. Presidency Conclusions from the meeting of the Council of the European Union, Helsinki, December 10–11, 1999. Available online (http://europa.eu.int/council/off/conclu/dec99/dec99_en.htm#external).
4. Soner Cagaptay, "European Union Reforms Diminish the Role of the Turkish Military: Ankara Knocking on Brussels' Door," *PolicyWatch* no. 781 (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, August 12, 2003). Available online (www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=1659).
5. Soner Cagaptay, Nazli Gencsoy, and Beril Unver, "The European Union Suggests Turkey Is Not Quite Ready: A Window of Opportunity for the United States," *PolicyWatch* no. 906 (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 7, 2004). Available online (www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2226).
6. Author interview with Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, January 12, 2005. According to this official, no European leader—with the exception of British prime minister Tony Blair—was willing to stand firmly by Ankara's side during the December 17 meeting.
7. EU Council, Presidency Conclusions, December 16–17, 2004.
8. European Commission, "Negotiating Framework for Turkey," October 3, 2005; available online (http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/docs/pdf/st20002_en05_TR_framedoc.pdf). For an excellent analysis of how the EU's negotiating framework with Turkey differs from its frameworks with other countries, see Fadu Hakura, "Partnership Is No Privilege: The Alternative to EU Membership Is No Turkish Delight," Chatham House Briefing Paper, September 2005; available online (www.chathamhouse.org.uk/pdf/research/europe/BPTurkeyeu.pdf).

criteria not required of other countries.⁹ Turkey must also undergo separate rounds of negotiations for each of the thirty-five “chapters” of policy issues to be addressed during accession talks, even though other candidates have addressed all chapters in a single round of talks. Moreover, while other candidates have negotiated with the EU as a single entity “led by the EU Commission,” Turkey will face an intergovernmental conference composed of representatives from each of the twenty-five member states. In essence, then, Ankara will have to negotiate thirty-five separate issues with twenty-five different interlocutors, effectively undergoing 875 rounds of talks. Such treatment has led many Turks to believe that accession is not an immediate possibility.¹⁰

Indeed, of the four candidate countries currently waiting to join the EU—Bulgaria and Romania are scheduled for admission in 2007, and Croatia is to begin accession talks this year—Turkey has the least favorable chance of becoming a member, particularly when objections to its accession are voiced on a near-daily basis. For example, Nicolas Sarkozy (the rising star of French politics, expected to replace President Jacques Chirac in 2007) and Angela Merkel (leader of the Christian Democratic Union in Germany) consistently state that they do not want Turkey to become part of Europe.¹¹ Why are so many in the EU opposed to Turkey’s membership?

European Objections

Turkey applied to join the EU’s forerunner, the European Economic Community (EEC), in 1963. At the time, the EEC had six members; the current EU has twenty-five. In other words, nineteen countries have

joined the EU since 1963, while Turkey has remained in the proverbial triage room. Moreover, Turkey’s progression through the initial phases of the accession process has been slower than that of all other candidates. For example, while countries like Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic were invited to accession talks exactly three years and nine months after the EU accepted them to candidacy, Turkey was made to wait five years and two months for the same technical decision (see figure 1).

Why has Turkey’s candidacy been so slow moving? Since the early 1990s, the EU’s hesitancy toward Ankara has centered on several different factors.

Democracy. In 1993, faced with a number of aspiring members from the former Warsaw Pact, the EU devised a set of rules, the Copenhagen Criteria, to determine conditions for accession. These criteria comprise three main elements:

- The political criterion (“the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and the respect and protection of minorities”)
- The economic criterion (“the existence of a functioning market economy”)
- The *Acquis Communautaire* (“the ability to take on the obligations of membership”)¹²

Only countries that satisfied the political criterion would be invited to accession talks, during which they

9. The aforementioned negotiating framework established the following unique prerequisites for Turkish accession: “Turkey’s unequivocal commitment to good neighbourly relations and its undertaking to resolve any outstanding border disputes in conformity with the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the United Nations Charter, including if necessary compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice; Turkey’s continued support for efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem within the UN framework and in line with the principles on which the Union is founded, including steps to contribute to a favourable climate for a comprehensive settlement, and progress in the normalisation of bilateral relations between Turkey and all EU Member States, including the Republic of Cyprus; the fulfilment of Turkey’s obligations under the Association Agreement and its Additional Protocol extending the Association Agreement to all new EU Member States, in particular those pertaining to the EU-Turkey customs union, as well as the implementation of the Accession Partnership, as regularly revised.”

10. Craig Smith, “Turkey Grows Impatient with Europe,” *New York Times*, June 11, 2005.

11. Nuray Nazli Inal and Düden Yegenoglu, “German and French Leaders’ Views on Turkey’s EU Membership,” *PolicyWatch* no. 1007 (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 27, 2005). Available online (www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2333).

12. An official EU outline of the criteria is available online (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/intro/criteria.htm>). The criteria are applied only after a country’s initial application has been accepted. Among other prerequisites, acceptance requires EU recognition that the applicant nation is geographically European (e.g., Morocco’s 1987 application was rejected on the grounds that the country lies outside Europe).

Figure 1. Comparative EU Enlargement Timetable

	APPLICATION → CANDIDACY	CANDIDACY → INVITATION	INVITATION → NEGOTIATIONS
Czech Republic	2 years 3 months	3 years 9 months	1 month
Hungary	3 years 10 months	3 years 9 months	1 month
Poland	3 years 11 months	3 years 9 months	1 month
Turkey	12 years 8 months	5 years 2 months	10 months

Sources: Information obtained from BBC News Country Profiles (available online at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles); Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Ankara, "Negotiations on Poland's Membership in the European Union, 1998–2000" (available online at www.polonya.org.tr/negotiations.htm); Axel Tschentscher, "International Constitutional Law Project: Hungary Index" (available online at www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/hu_idx.html); Interior Ministry, Czech Republic, "Report on the Security Situation in the Czech Republic in 1999" (available online at www.mvcr.cz/dokumenty/bezp_si99/angl/zloc1_4.html).

would then be required to satisfy the economic criterion and adopt the *Acquis Communautaire*.

The EU accepted Turkey's application in 1987. Throughout most of the 1990s, however, the union objected to Ankara's candidacy based on two perceived problems with Turkish democracy: failure to satisfy criteria regarding both the rule of law (specifically, the Turkish military's presence in the political sphere) and respect for minorities (specifically, the lack of Kurdish cultural rights).

In the wake of Ankara's efforts to implement EU reforms, however, those problems no longer exist. Between 2002 and 2004, Turkey passed seventeen legal reform packages to meet EU expectations and further liberalize its democracy. These changes have not been merely cosmetic. For example, the seventh EU reform package, adopted by the Turkish parliament on August 6, 2003, significantly curbed the

military's role in politics.¹³ As a result, the military was almost entirely absent from the vigorous public discussions regarding the UN plan to unify Cyprus ahead of the island's EU accession in May 2004. Instead, the debates were carried out by the AKP government, opposition parties, nongovernmental organizations, and the media.

Turkey also recorded significant progress on the Kurdish issue between 1999 and 2004. For example, following the aforementioned decision to permit Kurdish-language education and broadcasting, Kurdish-language schools opened in March 2004, while Kurdish-language programs began to appear on national television in June of that year.¹⁴

Despite these changes, objections to Turkish accession have only strengthened within the EU, and Brussels continues to confront Ankara with unique accession prerequisites beyond the Copenhagen Criteria.

13. "Turkey Has Done Her Homework," *NewsSpot* no. 40 (Office of the Prime Minister, Directorate-General of Press and Information, September–October 2003); available online (www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/newsSpot/2003/sept-oct/n8.htm). For details of the package, see "7. Uyum Paketi'ne MGK Tepkisi," *Radikal* (Istanbul), July 28, 2003 (available online at www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=83140); and Cagaptay, "European Union Reforms Diminish the Role of the Turkish Military."

14. "İlk Kürtçe Kurs," *Sabah* (Istanbul), March 14, 2004 (available online at <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2004/03/14/gun105.html>); "80 Yıllık Tabu Yıkıldı" *Sabah* (Istanbul), June 10, 2004 (available online at www.sabah.com.tr/2004/06/10/siy00.html). Turkey's efforts to address minority rights exceed those of some current EU member states. For example, when Latvia entered the EU in May 2004, half a million residents (one-fifth of the tiny Baltic country's population) lacked citizenship because they were Russian speakers (Latvian citizenship laws in the post-Soviet period require fluency in Latvian for all residents). In other words, one-fifth of the Latvian population cannot vote or obtain passports for travel out of the country. Clearly, Latvia has a less-than-perfect record regarding treatment of minorities.

Greece is another problematic case. Turkey now mandates three hours of public television and four hours of radio broadcasting per week in the country's six most widely used regional languages, including Kurdish. Although this is a limited effort to address the EU criterion of "respect for minorities," it far exceeds the treatment accorded to minority linguistic communities in Greece, where four of the five most widely used minority languages—Macedonian, Albanian, Bulgarian (Pomak), and Vlach (Aroumanian)—are banned from being broadcast (Turkish being the exception, ironically enough).

Publicly, European objections center on three key issues: geography, poverty, and Cyprus.

Geography. By accepting Ankara's application in 1987, the EU acknowledged that Turkey is geographically in Europe. Hence, current arguments to the contrary are patently weak. Moreover, the definition of Europe's boundaries is much broader than what cartographers gave in the past. For example, Cyprus, which joined the EU in May 2004, was long considered to be part of the Middle East—the island lies 65 miles from Syria and, at its shortest distance, 500 miles from the “European continent.”

Poverty. The average Turkish income is 28 percent of the median EU income.¹⁵ Yet, the Turkish economy has grown at an encouraging annual rate of 4.5 percent over the past two decades, compared to 1.5

percent annual growth in the EU. The former figure would be significantly higher if not for a 2001 slump in which the Turkish economy shrank by 9.5 percent. Moreover, Turkey's growth would certainly accelerate if its accession prospects improved, as was the case for Greece, Spain, and Portugal in the 1980s and for Eastern European candidate countries today. EU structural funds—including development cash for poor areas from wealthier Northern and Western Europe—would help Turkey modernize its infrastructure, while an improved accession forecast would bring increased trade and direct foreign investment. Even if Turkey remained poorer than the EU average for some time, its income and development levels are equal to, and in some cases well above, those of other candidate countries such as Romania and Bulgaria, which have already benefited from the “growth coefficient” associated with accession talks (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Development Indicators for EU Candidate Countries

	ROMANIA	BULGARIA	CROATIA	TURKEY
Total Population (2004)	22.35 million	7.5 million	4.5 million	68.8 million
Population Growth (2004)	-0.11%	-0.92%	-0.2%	1.49%
Gross Domestic Product Per Capita (2004)	\$7,700	\$8,278	\$11,200	\$7,400
Population below Poverty Line (2002)	44.5%	13.4%	4%	18%
Inflation (2004)	15.3%	2.3%	1.8%	8.7%
Unemployment (2004)	6.3%	12.7%	13.8%	9.3%
Foreign Trade (2003)	\$39.8 billion	\$17 billion	\$19.2 billion	\$111.25 billion
Labor Force in Agriculture (2003)	41.4%	26%	13.2%	39.7%
Cellular Phone Users (2003)	6.9 million	2.6 million	2.5 million	27.8 million
Land Lines (2003)	4.3 million	2.9 million	1.8 million	18.9 million

Sources: CIA World Factbook; WorldPress.org; Turkish State Statistics Institute (Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü)

15. According to the CIA World Factbook, the EU's gross domestic product (purchasing power parity) was \$26,900 in 2004, compared to \$7,400 for Turkey.

Cyprus. After years of relative inaction, Turkey and Turkish Cypriots have recently established a clear record of seeking compromise toward the island’s unification. Both supported the aforementioned unification plan proffered by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, with 65 percent of Turkish Cypriots voting in favor of it in an April 2004 referendum. The plan failed, however, because 76 percent of Greek Cypriots voted against it. Since then, the Greek Cypriots have vetoed the EU’s pre-referendum promises to reward Turkish Cypriot support for unification with aid, direct contacts, and trade.

More recently, European politicians have taken up the Cyprus issue in an effort to capitalize on popular opposition to Turkish membership. For example, French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin proposed that the EU make Turkish accession talks contingent on Ankara recognizing Greek Cyprus.¹⁶ Such demands effectively rule out accession because any Turkish government that recognized Greek Cyprus short of a comprehensive settlement would face tremendous challenges at home, including potential political collapse. At this stage, Brussels should be pushing the unyielding Greek Cypriots toward a compromise position as per the Annan plan, not punishing Turkish Cypriots and Ankara by placing obstacles on the path to accession talks.

Substantive Obstacles to Accession

None of the three issues discussed above represents a legitimate justification for blocking Turkish accession. What, then, is the EU’s real problem with Ankara? Quite simply, the EU sees Turkey as too big a bite to digest. Turkey’s population stands at 72 million people,¹⁷ compared to the EU total of 458 million.¹⁸ Moreover, the Turkish population is expanding at a rate of

1.49 percent annually,¹⁹ while the populations of many EU countries, especially those in Eastern Europe, are shrinking (see figure 3). In fact, EU birthrates are so low that the union’s population is projected to shrink to 435 million or less by 2050, while the Turkish population is expected to jump as high as 101 million. Under this scenario, Turks would constitute 19 percent of the EU’s total population.²⁰

Turkey’s size troubles EU leaders for two main reasons: money and power. Regarding the former, Turkish

Figure 3. Population Growth Rates in EU Member and Candidate Countries

	POPULATION	GROWTH RATE
Bulgaria	7,450,349	-0.89%
Romania	22,329,977	-0.12%
Croatia	4,495,904	-0.02%
Germany	82,431,390	0%
Poland	38,635,144	0.03%
Italy	58,103,033	0.07%
Spain	40,341,462	0.15%
Greece	10,668,354	0.19%
United Kingdom	60,441,457	0.28%
France	60,656,178	0.37%
Turkey	69,660,559	1.49%

Source: CIA World Factbook; Turkish State Statistics Institute (Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü)

16. Mehmet Ali Birand, “Paris Is Selling Out Both the EU and Cyprus,” *Turkish Daily News*, August 17, 2005.

17. Information obtained from CIA World Factbook, July 2005 (available online at www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html).

18. Information obtained from Eurostat, January 2005 (available online at http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/portal/page?_pageid=1996,39140985&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&screen=detailref&language=en&product=Yearlies_new_population&root=Yearlies_new_population/C/C1/C11/caa11024).

19. Figure obtained from the Turkish State Statistics Institute (Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü).

20. Population information for Turkey and individual EU countries can be found at “World Population Prospects: 2004 Revision,” a database maintained by the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (available online at <http://esa.un.org/unpp/index.asp?panel=3>). The database’s “medium variant” is used here.

accession would have a potentially profound impact on the EU budget. Typically, the union provides its poorer members with vast amounts of structural funds in order to raise their income levels closer to the community average. This aid has become a heavy burden on the budgets of individual EU states, especially since their economies have been in slow-growth mode for nearly a decade. The EU's 2004 expansion meant that additional funds had to be found for ten relatively poor new member states with 75 million residents—a major test for the union. Although Turkey is no poorer than any of the other candidate countries, its 72 million mostly low-income inhabitants would qualify it for a larger amount of structural funds and other aid.²¹ The EU would have difficulty raising the required revenue and is loathe to admit this painful shortcoming.

Turkey's population would also affect the balance of power in the EU, entitling Ankara to a large say in EU decisionmaking. Member countries have proportional votes in many EU decisions. If Turkey were to become a member in 2014, the earliest likely accession date, its projected population of 81 million people would give it control over approximately 13.2 percent of an expanded EU's internal votes.²² That would make Turkey one of the union's most powerful members, rivaling Germany, which would have a projected 82 million people and control over 13.6 percent of EU votes. European politicians often raise this issue when expressing concerns about Turkish membership.²³

Yet, if European leaders are not concerned about Germany controlling such a large proportion of the EU's votes, why are they opposed to Turkey holding similar power? One answer is that Germany and France, as the founders of the EU, do not want to cede their dominant

position to a newcomer state, especially a poor one that could leverage its votes to gain more resources.

Another oft-voiced answer is that the EU powers-that-be do not want a Muslim-majority country to assume a leading role in the union. Most European politicians avoid raising objections to Turkish accession based on the country's majority religion.²⁴ Yet, unless the EU is frank about its greatest concerns—namely, its potential inability to handle the economic and political consequences of Turkish membership—its use of unconvincing arguments to impede accession will be perceived as expressions of old prejudices against Islam. Indeed, such disingenuousness could send a negative message to those Muslims who believe in the EU ideals of open, democratic societies and rule of law. This is especially true for European Muslims, the continent's fastest-growing religious community.

Potential Benefits for the EU

As a secular country, Turkey offers Europe lessons on how to deal with, even modernize, Islam. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, drew inspiration from nineteenth-century French and European sociology. Today, Turkish secularism provides political freedom from religion in a manner similar to the French concept of *laïcité*. Just as Turkey learned from Europe in the past, the EU can now turn to Turkey for ideas as it grapples with its own growing and restless Muslim community. For example, Turkish secularism has created a tradition of “state Islam” whereby the government builds and staffs mosques to curb the influence of jihadist preachers. Meanwhile, Turkish Islam has adapted to existence “in a society where secular values prevail.”²⁵ Indeed, as a predominantly

21. The amount of annual aid for which Turkey would qualify varies from the conservative estimate of 4 billion euros to the much higher figure of 20 billion euros. See Kemal Derviş, Daniel Gros, et al., “Turkey and the EU budget: Prospects and Issues,” *EU-Turkey Working Papers* no. 6 (Centre for European Policy Studies, August 2004); available online (<http://jmp.iku.edu.tr/Turkey%20and%20the%20European%20Budget-CEPS%20Paper-Aug.2004.pdf>).

22. UN, “World Population Prospects: 2004 Revision.” The expanded EU reflected in these statistics would include Turkey, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Romania. For more information, see Richard Baldwin and Mika Widgren, “The Impact of Turkey's Membership on EU Voting,” Discussion Paper no. 4954 (Centre for Economic Policy Research, March 2005); available online (www.cepr.org/pubs/new-dps/dplist.asp?dpno=4954).

23. Author interview with EU member country diplomat, June 13, 2005.

24. Only retired politicians seem to brave this argument. For example, former French president Giscard d'Estaing stated that Turkey should not be granted membership because most Turks are Muslims. “Türkiye Avrupalı değil,” *Milliyet* (Istanbul), September 22, 2002; available online (www.milliyet.com/2002/11/09/dunya/adun.html).

25. Andrew Mango, *The Turks Today* (Overlook Press, 2004), p. 130.

Figure 4. Public Opinion on Turkey’s EU Accession

Turkey’s membership in the EU would be...?	UNITED STATES	FRANCE	GERMANY	UNITED KINGDOM	ITALY	NETHERLANDS	POLAND	SPAIN
A good thing	35%	11%	15%	32%	31%	25%	22%	26%
A bad thing	7%	47%	40%	19%	21%	33%	20%	23%
Neither good nor bad	41%	41%	43%	41%	43%	39%	41%	41%

Source: Adapted with permission from “Transatlantic Trends: Key Findings 2005” (www.transatlantictrends.org), a survey project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Compagnia di San Paolo, with additional support from the Luso American Foundation and the Fundacion BBVA.

Muslim yet secular and democratic nation, Turkey has much to offer the EU.

Turkish accession would also be Europe’s best investment in “Western Islam.” Unfortunately, many Europeans fail to see that Turks are Western Muslims who acclimate to Europe more readily than other Muslim immigrants. A comparison between France, whose Muslim community is mostly North African, and Germany, whose Muslim community is mostly Turkish, demonstrates this fact. The heavily disenfranchised North African Muslim community in France is the hotbed of radical Islam in the EU. Yet, fundamentalist Islam has failed to take root among Turks in Germany, despite numerous legal hurdles impeding their assimilation. For example, prior to 2001, it was practically impossible for Turks to obtain German citizenship, even if they were born in Germany. Nevertheless, Turks have integrated more readily into German society than have North Africans in France. For example, although they constitute nearly ten percent of the French population, North Africans have no representation in the French parliament. Yet, Turks—who constitute only 4 percent of the Ger-

man population—have already placed five deputies in the German legislature, despite obtaining citizenship rights only four years ago.

A wall or a bridge? Most Europeans seem to believe that Turkish accession would bring the continent closer to the turmoil of the Middle East. From their perspective, Turkey is a wall that has shielded Europe from a troublesome zone and that should remain as such.²⁶ This view is fundamentally different from that found in the United States, where Turkey is seen as a bridge connecting Europe and the Middle East rather than a wall separating the two (see figure 4 for a comparison of EU and American views on Turkish accession). Indeed, the EU cannot become a chief actor in Middle Eastern politics and peacemaking efforts until it grants membership to a country bordering that region. Barring Turkish accession would also make it more difficult for the EU to gain privileged access to the rich energy resources in the Middle East, Caucasus, and Central Asia. The choice is clear, then: without Turkey, the EU is a regional club; with Turkey, it could become a powerful global player on several fronts.

26. It should be noted that a few prominent EU politicians—including British prime minister Tony Blair, German Green Party leader Joschka Fischer, and Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi—do seem to acknowledge the strategic value of Turkish accession. For example, on October 4, 2005, following the commencement of Turkey’s EU accession talks, Berlusconi stated that Turkish membership would create “a bridge between Europe and the Muslim world.” “A Paris, Jacques Chirac et Silvio Berlusconi défendent la candidature turque à l’UE,” *Le Monde*, October 4, 2005.

Enter the PKK

THE DETERIORATION of Turkish-EU ties would not be so alarming if Ankara's ties with its other principal Western partner, the United States, were in good shape. The U.S.-Turkish relationship has been strained as well, however, and it will face further tests throughout 2005 and 2006. These challenges will most likely center on the PKK.

The resurgence of PKK terrorism since Turkey received its invitation to accession talks in December 2004 represents a seismic change in the landscape. Between 1984 and 1999, the group carried out a terrorist campaign against Turkey that caused more than 30,000 deaths. Such activity led the U.S. State Department to designate the PKK a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). When Turkey captured PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in February 1999, the group was paralyzed. It declared a unilateral ceasefire on August 1 of that year and moved most of its members from Turkey to northern Iraq in exchange for a commutation of Ocalan's death sentence. Subsequently, some analysts believed that the organization had permanently renounced violence.

In reality, however, the PKK continued to use both peaceful and violent tactics. On April 4, 2002, the group changed its name to the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK), shifting its goal from an "independent Kurdistan" to a "democratic Turkey" in which Kurds would be considered one of the country's two constituent nations alongside Turks—an unrealistic demand that clashed with the nature of the unitarian Turkish state. At that stage, the organization shied away from large-scale violence and eschewed its previous armed propaganda tactics.

Despite these apparent changes, the State Department added KADEK to its FTO list on May 1, 2003.

Soon thereafter, the organization changed its name to the Kurdistan Society Congress (Kongra-Gel). Then, in June 2004, the organization renounced its ceasefire and resumed its use of violence. Between June 2004 and January 2005, it deployed an estimated 1,200 militants from northern Iraq across the porous and rugged border into Turkey.¹ Currently, the organization has an estimated 4,000 operatives in areas of northern Iraq controlled by two Iraqi Kurdish factions: the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).²

New Strategy: Violence and Political Action

The PKK now aims to transform itself into a political party with a military wing. Although Kurdish nationalist political parties in Turkey have traditionally been secondary to the PKK, one new party—the Democratic Society Movement (DTH)—seems poised to become the main body of the extreme Kurdish nationalist movement, with the military element remaining active on the side.³ DTH was founded in October 2004 by several former members of the Turkish parliament who had represented the Kurdish Nationalist People's Democratic Party (HADEP), the preeminent Kurdish party of the late 1980s. It has replaced the Democratic People's Party (DEHAP), which performed poorly in the March 2004 local elections and dissolved itself in August 2005 to join DTH. At present, DTH remains a movement, but it aims to transform itself into a formal party.

Several clear links have emerged between DTH and the PKK. For example, Ocalan reportedly has a role in the movement.⁴ Moreover, there is significant overlap

1. Soner Cagaptay and Emrullah Uslu, "Is the PKK Still a Threat to the United States and Turkey?" *PolicyWatch* no. 940 (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 10, 2005). Available online (www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2217).
2. These estimates were made by the Directorate-General of the Turkish National Police in "İs, te terör kampları," *Milliyet* (Istanbul), August 4, 2005. Available online (www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/08/04/siyaset/asiy.html).
3. Cagaptay and Uslu, "Is the PKK Still a Threat?"
4. Turkish intelligence has tracked communications between Ocalan and the former HADEP parliamentarians who founded DTH (author interview with Turkish intelligence official, July 22, 2005). Moreover, Ocalan made several telling remarks to the press on April 18, July 31, and October 23, 2004; as reported in the Kurdish nationalist daily *Özgür Politika*, these remarks included prescriptions for DTH's future course of action.

between the demands made by Kongra-Gel and DTH, including joint emphasis on “constitutional recognition [of] all ethnic identities, including Kurdish identity.”

As this transformation period unfolds, the PKK seems intent on embracing violence as a useful bargaining tool. Whereas it previously focused either on violent tactics or on political action, the PKK is now pursuing both with the help of Turkey’s relaxed political environment. Accordingly, the group has sought a highly visible public face through DTH. This strategy was deliberately launched in anticipation of the EU’s December 17, 2004, decision to invite Ankara to accession talks. On December 8 and 9, a group of Kurdish nationalists close to DTH and DEHAP placed advertisements in the *International Herald Tribune* and *Le Monde* demanding that Turkey give the Kurds political rights similar to those enjoyed by the Basques in Spain and other federated or autonomous nationalities in Europe.⁵ Subsequently, the PKK launched a public campaign calling for Ocalan’s release, as evidenced by declarations on the Kongra-Gel website (www.kongra-gel.net).

These moves were preceded and accompanied by PKK attacks against Turkish security personnel across Turkey and in northern Iraq.⁶ For example, in the three months following its ceasefire renunciation in June 2004, the group carried out 109 attacks.⁷ More recently, Turkish casualties resulting from PKK attacks have occurred at a rate similar to that faced by U.S. forces in Iraq.⁸ In addition, the group carried out a number of bombings in resort cities in metropolitan

western Turkey, harming the country’s \$15-billion-per-year tourism industry.

The PKK’s two-pronged strategy seemed to backfire, as Turks reacted to the violence with increasing anger. In several cases, large mobs attacked both PKK members captured by security forces and DEHAP/DTH sympathizers. On August 23, 2005, for example, a mob attempted to lynch PKK members being pursued by security forces in Macka, near Trabzon.⁹ Then, on September 5, a busload of DTH members returning from a failed attempt to visit Ocalan (currently imprisoned on the island of Imrali) was accosted by a mob in Bozuyuk.¹⁰ The passengers had plastered the bus windows with pictures of Ocalan and made victory signs as they approached the crowd. Meanwhile, grassroots nationalist organizations are springing up throughout Turkey to fight the PKK directly. One such group, the Movement of United Patriotic Forces (Vatansever Kuvvetler Güçbirliği Hareketi), reportedly has ninety branches operating in half of Turkey’s eighty-one provinces.

In addition to destabilizing Turkey, the PKK’s resurgence is also harming U.S.-Turkish relations. For example, according to its website, the aforementioned anti-PKK group includes among its objectives resistance to (implicitly American) imperialism and foreign influence.¹¹ Indeed, the ambiguous or tentative U.S. and EU responses to Ankara’s request for help in fighting the PKK are rapidly poisoning Turkey’s relations with the Western world.¹² The more the PKK uses Turkey’s newly liberal political environment to disseminate

5. The nationalists in question included former members of parliament such as Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Ahmet Turk, and Leyla Zana, as well as Serafettin Elci, Mehdi Zana, and Kendal Nezan (director of the Kurdish Institute in Paris).

6. Fatma Demirelli, “Mosul Attack Touches Raw Nerves in Ankara,” *Turkish Daily News*, December 21, 2004. Available online (www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=1974).

7. Cagaptay and Uslu, “Is the PKK Still a Threat?”

8. Author interview with Turkish military officer, September 30, 2005.

9. “Syrian-Origin Terrorist Killed in Trabzon Street Chase,” *Journal of Turkish Weekly*, August 24, 2005. Available online (www.turkishweekly.net/news.php?id=18406).

10. “Ocalan provokasyonu her yerde: 144 yaralı,” *Milliyet* (Istanbul), September 5, 2005. Available online (www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/09/05/son/sontur03.html).

11. See www.vkgb.com/hakkimizda.asp

12. Washington has not fulfilled its promises to combat the PKK presence in northern Iraq. Moreover, PKK front organizations continue to thrive in the EU. For example, on August 31, 2005, Ankara voiced concerns over Roj TV (www.roj.tv/rojtv_en_directe.kphp), a PKK television station broadcasting out of Denmark. In addition to propaganda, the station beams alerts to PKK members in eastern Turkey regarding the movements of Turkish security forces (see “General Buyukanit Warns about PKK in Turkey,” *Turks/U.S. Daily News*, August 31, 2005; available online at www.turks.us/article.php?story=20050831145835117). The Danish response was not encouraging. On September 1, a spokesman for the Danish Prime Minister’s Office claimed that Denmark “did not have any information about the PKK obtaining a license to broadcast in Denmark” (“Danışman Mechael Helboe: PKK TV’sini Bilmiyoruz,” *Hürriyet* [Istanbul], September 1, 2005; available online at www.hurriyetim.com.tr/haber/0,,sid~1@w~2@tarikh~2005-09-01-m@nvid~625132,00.asp).

propaganda while conducting violence, the harsher the public reaction will be. All signs indicate that this backlash will assume an increasingly anti-Western flavor. Such trends should serve as a warning to Washing-

ton: although Turkish anger over the PKK was previously directed at Europe (which grants safe haven to numerous PKK front organizations), this resentment is now aimed at the United States as well.

The Rise of Muslim Nationalism

IN ADDITION TO growing Turkish anxieties regarding the PKK, the Iraq war has engendered an even more serious threat to U.S.-Turkish relations: a shift in Turkish attitudes toward the Muslim Middle East. For decades, Turkey looked to the West for political and economic cues. Copious anecdotal evidence suggests that the Turks deliberately cut themselves off from their Muslim neighbors. For example, until recently, Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not train its diplomats in Arabic, while evening news programs on Turkish television included weather forecasts for Paris and Stockholm but not for Damascus or Tehran. All of that has changed, however; Turkey has now become Syria's best friend and is closer to Iran than it has been since the shah was in power.

The Polarizing Effect of Iraq

As a result of the Iraq war, many Turks discovered their cultural and religious affinity with Iraqis, Syrians, and Iranians much as they embraced their ethnic affinity with Turkic countries following the Soviet collapse. The war angered every significant political group in Turkey, from Islamists to leftists to nationalists. Islamists abhor it as an assault on a fellow Muslim nation,¹ while most leftists view it as illegitimate, in line with the EU position.

For their part, Turkish nationalists—the largest and most powerful constituency throughout the country and within the secular bureaucratic elite in Ankara—see the war as America's effort to establish a Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Traditionally, the nationalists have opposed closer ties with the Muslim Middle East. Yet, the fact that the PKK enjoys safe haven in northern Iraq has convinced them of the wisdom of improving Turkey's links with Syria and Iran, both of which have their own concerns about Kurdish independence in Iraq. Accordingly, even many secular-minded and

formerly pro-Western Turks now oppose much of Washington's Middle East policy.

Despite its vigorous criticism of the U.S.-led war in 2003 and early 2004, the AKP government abandoned such rhetoric following Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's visit to Ankara and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul's visits to Washington. In fact, the AKP is now supportive of developments in Iraq. On August 30, for example, Erdogan wrote an op-ed for the *Wall Street Journal* commending the new Iraqi constitution. Nevertheless, persistent media branding of Iraqis as friends and Americans as occupiers of a fellow Muslim country has strengthened Turkish sympathies for the former, particularly the Sunni Arab community. The stark images of collateral damage shown daily on Turkish television have only reinforced these sympathies.

These developments explain the unlikely overlap between nationalist and Islamist agendas in Turkey. Both of these constituencies deeply resent the United States for its actions in Iraq, and both seem to desire closer ties with Syria and, to a lesser extent, Iran.

The shift toward Damascus and Tehran is also based on the concept of "strategic depth." Stemming from Ankara's traditional proclivity toward region-based foreign policy, this approach assumes that Turkey's future power depends on establishing valuable ties within its own neighborhood as well as with the West, cultivating potential allies rather than enemies.² These efforts include Syria and Iran, both of which have often had contentious relations with Ankara.

Regarding Syria, the AKP has dramatically improved its ties with Damascus on several fronts. Syria, too, views such rapprochement as a strategic opportunity, given that it is surrounded by Israel, Jordan, and Iraq. Accordingly, the two governments have conducted more than thirty ministerial visits since

1. Hüsnü Mahalli, "Irak İşgali, İsrail ve Gül," *Yeni Safak* (Istanbul), April 16, 2003. Available online (www.yenisafak.com.tr/arsiv/2003/nisan/16/hmahalli.html).

2. See Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik* (Ankara: Küre Yayınları, 2001).

2002, including Syrian president Bashar al-Asad's January 2004 trip to Ankara, during which he and his wife were showered with media praise. The two countries have also signed cooperation agreements on issues ranging from oil and gas to security affairs. As a result, bilateral trade volume, which stood at \$241 million in 1999, increased to \$910 million in 2003. In addition, they have held consultations on Iraq, since both view the emergence of a quasi-independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq with apprehension. Such relations are a far cry from the 1990s, when Damascus supported the PKK and harbored Ocalan, spurring Turkey to mass troops on the Syrian border.

Turkey is also enhancing its ties with Iran. Trade between the two countries has boomed since the AKP rose to power, growing from \$1.2 billion in 2002 to

\$2.7 billion in 2004. In July 2005, Erdogan visited Tehran to discuss deeper economic, political, and security ties, including a potential deal to purchase Iranian natural gas. To be sure, Ankara still has qualms about Tehran. Many in the AKP fear that Shiite Iran poses a challenge to their predominantly Sunni country, while the military has taken issue with Iran's support of PKK and fundamentalist terrorism in Turkey. Military leaders have also expressed concern about Iran's nuclear program (although one AKP politician stated that the prospect of an Iranian nuclear weapon "is only as much a threat to Turkey as Israel's weapon would be"³). Despite these reservations, Turkey's ties with Iran are stronger than they have been in many years, in no small part because of shared concerns regarding Kurdish independence in northern Iraq.

3. Interview by author, August 11, 2004.

The U.S. Role in Preserving Turkey's Western Orientation

IT WILL BE YEARS before the majority of EU politicians recognize the wisdom of admitting Turkey into the union, and even longer before their constituents come to the same conclusion. This realization will require serious debate about Europe's aging, shrinking population and the impending failure of one of its quintessential institutions, the welfare state. The EU will also require time to understand the unique value of Turkish democracy and secularism in the post-September 11 world. Given the likely dearth of near-term European engagement in preserving Turkey's Western orientation, the United States must take an active interest in this matter. The rise of Muslim nationalism, the resurgence of PKK terrorism, and the fallout of Iraq-related issues have placed Turkey at a crossroads in its relations with the West, and Washington has ample cause for concern about Ankara's future direction.

Moderates or Democrats?

In order to maintain ties that will keep Turkey anchored in the West, the United States must identify its allies in Turkey and the wider Muslim world. For years—and particularly since the September 11 attacks—some policymakers have argued that “moderate Muslims” are America's allies. A strategy aimed at courting such individuals would be abortive, however. For Islamists, the incendiary term “moderate Islam” implies a watered-down version of the true faith, while for secular-minded activists, any strategy aimed at reaching out to “moderate Muslims” is an alienating approach that favors Islamists, regardless of what they are called.

America's allies in the Muslim world are not “moderate Islamists” but true democrats. Accordingly, Washington should focus on winning back secular Turks of all political stripes. This secular constituency—prominent among the bureaucracy and military and representing a majority of the Turkish population, both left and right—feels slighted by the U.S. strategy of reaching out to moderate Islam. If the United States can regain the favor of Turkey's majority national-

ists, minority Islamists will either follow along or fold before the challenge of fighting the mainstream in determining the country's orientation. If Washington fails to win Turkey's heart, however, growing Muslim nationalism—along with the PKK issue and the ripple effects of the Iraq war—could transform the country into an increasingly anti-Western power.

Confronting the PKK

The surest way for Washington to reach Turkey's majority nationalists is by addressing the issue that they feel most strongly about: the PKK. As discussed previously, many Turks blame the United States for recent PKK attacks because the organization is based in northern Iraq. Washington's reluctance to confront the PKK has only exacerbated distrust among Turkey's nationalist policymakers, especially the security elite, traditionally Washington's most committed partners. The PKK could damage U.S.-Turkish relations even further if it expanded its attacks into western Turkey—an area containing all of Turkey's large cities, almost all its tourism infrastructure, and a major share of its economic assets. Indeed, the western part of the country lies at the center of Turkish public attention, and any sensational attacks there would turn the full force of the public's ire against the United States.

Ironically enough, Washington can learn a great deal from Syria and Iran regarding how best to deal with the PKK. Both countries understand that they have much to gain by going after the group directly. Abandoning their 1990s policy of “war by proxy” against Turkey via support for the PKK, they are now fighting the group in a bid to win Turkey's heart. For example, on June 21, 2005, Damascus declared that it had sentenced several PKK members to thirty months in prison. Tehran adopted a similar policy, attacking PKK bases in Iran that it had previously tolerated. If the United States were to actively confront the PKK, it would quickly fall back into favor with most Turks.

Washington can approach this problem from two angles at once. The first involves law enforcement mea-

asures such as targeting PKK front organizations and financial assets in the West. Indeed, some progress has already been made toward that end. Through such actions, Washington can show the Turkish public that the United States is sincere about helping them fight the PKK. In particular, Washington could use its channels to Europe to counter the group's activities, since many PKK-related organizations enjoy safe haven there (including media arms such as the previously discussed Roj TV in Denmark).

The second angle entails confronting the PKK directly in northern Iraq. Many have questioned whether force is the only option in that arena. In the wake of Turkey's EU reforms—as discussed previously, Kurds can now attend classes and listen to news programs in their own language, an unthinkable development as recently as a few years ago—some expected that the PKK might hear the voice of reason and renounce violence. Yet, the organization seems incapable of such change, largely because both its members and supporters are steeped in a culture of violence. Since its inception in the late 1970s, the PKK has perpetuated this culture, which was already prevalent among the rural, mostly tribal Sunni Kurdish population of southeastern Turkey. In the 1980s and 1990s, the organization resorted to every imaginable form of violence, such as slaughtering the entire population of one village unsympathetic to its cause in order to coerce nearby villages into submission. Today, it uses violence in an effort to pull Turkey into a political maelstrom and derail EU accession. In this context, the group's declared ceasefires mean little—the PKK will not abandon terrorism of its own volition.

The best short-term method of fighting the organization in northern Iraq is by targeting its leadership. The PKK is more hierarchical than most terrorist groups, composed of a limited number of leadership cadres (who excel at finding allies, funds, and recruits) overseeing fighters who lack proficiency in such functions. Rather than launching a full-scale war on the PKK, the United States can paralyze it by helping to capture its leaders, such as when Turkey captured Abdullah Ocalan with U.S. assistance in 1999. In addition to ameliorating Turkish public attitudes and fore-

stalling a bilateral crisis, such cooperation could help rebuild longstanding bridges between the U.S. and Turkish military elite.

In pursuing this strategy, the United States would need help from the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), since the PKK enjoys safe haven in areas of Iraq under their jurisdiction. Washington could improve its chances of obtaining such assistance by pointing out two key benefits. First, by joining the fight against the PKK, the KDP and PUK could demonstrate their sincere commitment to the global war on terror, even Kurdish terror. Second, they could signal to Ankara that they are interested in preserving Turkey's stability. Only then could they convince Turkey that it has nothing to fear from a Kurdish entity in Iraq.

Cyprus: An Immediate Opportunity

Although action against the PKK would be the most effective way of swaying Turkish public opinion, Washington has a less costly option that could reap more immediate rewards. The fate of Turkish Cyprus is important to Turkey's EU accession, and working to resolve the island's situation could improve America's standing significantly.

Prior to the April 2004 UN-supported referendum, Washington and Brussels declared that they would end the isolation of Turkish Cyprus if its residents supported Secretary-General Kofi Annan's unification plan, which they did. Since the referendum, Greek Cyprus—which was granted entry into the EU despite voting against the Annan plan—has forced the union to renege on its promise. Yet, the United States remains free to fulfill its own commitments to Turkish Cypriots by easing their humanitarian difficulties. In fact, with some creative thinking, Washington could use the Turkish Cypriot situation to both close a bitter chapter in U.S.-Turkish relations and show the Turkish public that the United States cares more about Turkey than does the EU.

Washington's initial efforts to help Turkish Cyprus have already improved Turkish public opinion. On February 17, 2005, an American trade delegation made the first official U.S. visit to Turkish Cyprus. On July

19, acting U.S. ambassador to Turkey Nancy McEldowney invited Tamer Gazioglu, the Turkish Cypriot ambassador in Ankara, to dinner at her residence. These and other developments have received much positive coverage in the Turkish media. For example, a May 31 visit by U.S. congressmen was such a successful public diplomacy move that even Turkey's Islamist

and conservative press praised Washington. That a largely symbolic visit could achieve so much shows the potential benefits of the United States acting further on its promises to Turkish Cypriots. Particularly helpful measures could include establishing direct flights to and from Turkish Cyprus, facilitating trade and cultural ties, and expanding U.S. political contacts.

Conclusion

UNTIL RECENTLY, most Turks felt comfortable with the status quo in the Middle East. Yet, the Iraq war, the PKK's resurgence, and the region's ongoing transformation have made them anxious about U.S. foreign policy. The war also produced feelings of solidarity between Turks and their Muslim neighbors. At the same time, the drawn-out EU accession process has created strains between Ankara and Europe. In light of these developments, a grave scenario has appeared on the horizon: that of Turkish alienation from the entire Western world. Washington must put forth greater effort on several fronts if it is to prevent this scenario from developing further.

Doing so requires mutual steps and more active statesmanship by both parties. Washington should consider building confidence with Ankara by taking action on Cyprus and the PKK. The two countries should also follow up on recent Turkish diplomatic visits to Washington by developing a solid bilateral agenda like that seen in the 1990s. This new agenda could include cooperation on issues beyond the combustive Middle East arena, including stabilization efforts in Afghanistan (where Turkey has successfully led the International Security Assistance Force); energy politics and democratization in the Caucasus and Central Asia; Black Sea security issues; and the global war on terror.¹ Such cooperation would help ensure that the relationship is able to handle any future crisis.

The two countries should also focus on improving their economic ties. When the relationship faced a crisis in 2003, problems were compounded by a lack of

strong economic relations to support bilateral military and political ties. Washington and Ankara have several options for avoiding a repeat of this situation. In particular, they should revisit the idea of establishing Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) in Turkey as a means of boosting bilateral trade.² They should also take steps to increase U.S. investment in Turkey. By doing so, they could foster a powerful business lobby that would no doubt intercede in any future bilateral crisis—something that did not happen in 2003.

Finally, as Turkey's EU accession negotiations unfold, Ankara will continue to need significant U.S. lobbying to help improve its membership prospects. Whatever the nature of the accession talks, both the American and Turkish policy elite should emphasize the shared values between Turks, Americans, and the wider Western world, highlighting Turkey's unique status as a secular, Muslim-majority democracy with strong ties to the West.

The sooner such actions are taken, the better the prospects for preserving the U.S.-Turkish relationship. Some may suggest that action on, for example, the PKK issue need not be carried out immediately, and that Washington should instead give priority to fighting the Iraqi insurgency. Yet, it would be a great irony if the United States lost Turkey while trying to hold on to Iraq. Dangerously shorn as it is of Middle Eastern allies, Washington cannot afford further deterioration in its relations with a country that has long been one of the Western world's greatest allies in the region.

1. For a discussion of U.S.-Turkish cooperation in Turkey's northern Eurasian neighborhood, see Soner Cagaptay, "The United States and Turkey in 2004: Time to Look North," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (Winter 2003); available online (www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=788). For an analysis of likely U.S.-Turkish security cooperation in the Black Sea basin, see Orhan Babaoglu, "The Black Sea Basin: A New Axis in Global Maritime Security," *PolicyWatch* no. 1027 (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, August 24, 2005); available online (www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2361).
2. A QIZ initiative stalled in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2002. See Helena Kane Finn, "U.S.-Turkish Economic Partnership Commission: Time to Take a Look at QIZs," *PolicyWatch* no. 603 (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 11, 2002); available online (www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=1481). See also Soner Cagaptay, "Why Are the Turks Hesitating on Iraq?" *PolicyWatch* no. 603 (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 27, 2003); available online (www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=1582).

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