

**21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY KEMALISM**  
**REDEFINING TURKEY-EU RELATIONS**  
**IN THE POST-HELSINKI ERA**  
**NATHALIE TOCCI**

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# **21<sup>st</sup> Century Kemalism**

## **Redefining Turkey-EU Relations**

### **in the Post-Helsinki Era**

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**Nathalie Tocci\***

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#### **Abstract**

The initial wave of optimism in Turkey-EU relations following the 1999 Helsinki summit has given way to a renewed period of scepticism and mutual mistrust between the two partners. Based upon an analysis of the Kemalist political context and the attitudes and positions of both Turkey and the EU towards each other, this paper makes some suggestions on how to revitalise Turkey-EU relations. The EU could complement Turkey's EU accession process with a concrete 'European strategy' for Turkey including trade, monetary, security and foreign policy elements. This could both reinforce the rapprochement between the two and accelerate Turkish democratic reform in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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\* Research Fellow, CEPS. Thanks to Esra Bulut for comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

# **21<sup>st</sup> Century Kemalism: Redefining Turkey-EU Relations in the Post-Helsinki era**

**Nathalie Tocci**

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## **1. Introduction**

On 8 November 2000 the European Commission published its yearly report on Turkey's progress towards EU accession.<sup>1</sup> Based upon its conclusions, the Commission also drafted an Accession Partnership document, recommending short and medium-term measures Turkey should take in view of beginning accession negotiations with the Union.<sup>2</sup> Both documents focus heavily upon Turkey's political system and more precisely upon the country's shortcomings in the fields of democratisation and human rights. Official criticism is often made of Turkey's political system. Yet rarely do criticisms take into account the underlying roots of particular problems or the wider context of the Turkish polity in which they occur. In the author's view, neglecting these critical issues could harm both Turkey-EU relations and Turkey's political development by giving rise to unrealistic expectations and mutual misunderstandings.

The aim of this paper is two-fold. First, it attempts to provide an insight into the overall context of political questions such as the Kurdish issue, political Islam, the political role of the military, the Cyprus question and relations with Armenia, which are repeatedly mentioned by European officials. Well-grounded criticisms and recommendations can only be made if the specificity of the Turkish context is taken into account. Second, the paper turns to the Union and suggests possible constructive next steps it could take to further relations with Turkey and advance its democratic political development.

## **2. The Kemalist nation-state and its implications**

Many of the of the current political problems in modern day Turkey appear to be at least in part directly or indirectly related to a specific interpretation of the Kemalist state and nation. This particular interpretation has fundamentally shaped the political and to some extent economic development of the Republic and has crucially affected the evolution of Turkey-EU

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, (November 2000), Regular Report on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, (November 2000), Proposal for a Council Decision on the principles, priorities, intermediate objectives and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with the Republic of Turkey.

relations. Two fundamental features will be analysed in this section: first the Turkish concept of the state and nation and second the means through which the state has implemented this principle throughout the decades of the Republic.

## **2.1 The traditional Kemalist view of the Turkish state and nation**

Founded upon the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, the pillars of the new Republic of Turkey were grounded upon and deliberately accounted for what were to be believed to be the causes of failure of the old regime. The Kemalist elite reacted strongly against Ottoman expansionism and national heterogeneity. Heterogeneity was regarded as having fostered separate identities within the Empire, having prevented the integration of peoples and having reduced popular loyalty towards the state. They were thus seen, as having encouraged the disintegration of the Empire from within as well as the latter's weakness against external threats. Expansionism was instead blamed for the repeated wars of the Empire, which ultimately led to its collapse.

Mustafa Kemal, later Atatürk, thus conceived a new vision of the nation-state in the nascent Republic. He aimed to secure the unity and loyalty of all citizens through the creation of an indivisible and homogeneous nation, whose territorial borders would not be subject to alteration with the conquest of foreign lands. In the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne<sup>3</sup> in fact the Turkish Republic renounced all claims to formerly Ottoman territories. This new notion of the nation-state was regarded as critical to the survival and development of a new country in a dangerous and unstable environment.

In order to create a single, indivisible and homogenous nation able to fend off all threats to the state, Atatürk attempted to impart upon the peoples of Anatolia and Rumelia the 19<sup>th</sup> century French conception of civic nationalism and citizenship. The concept of statehood and nationhood was new to Ottoman peoples. Self-identification had so far been a function of primordial religious, family, tribal or village affiliations.<sup>4</sup> Loyalty to the state was an alien notion, where peoples had merely regarded themselves as the subjects of a distant Sultan. However, these principles were seen as prerequisites of a strong nation-state. Yet, within the Republic a large minority did not belong to the dominant Turkish and Sunni Muslim group. Atatürk thus set out to square the circle of achieving political homogeneity within a culturally heterogeneous society by adopting a civic understanding of the nation. The 'Turk' would be a citizen of the new Republic, and not an Anatolian Muslim from a particular class

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<sup>3</sup> Article 16 *Treaty of Lausanne* (1923).

or ethnic group. All citizens would be first class citizens regardless of their race or religion. Hence, no minorities, other than those mentioned by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, would be recognised. Minority status entailed the existence of differentiated citizenship based upon ethnicity. It was thus viewed in a pejorative light. The concept of civic nationalism and citizenship are strongly present in the Turkish Constitution. Article 66 of the Constitution states that ‘everyone bound to the Turkish state through the bond of citizenship is a Turk’.

The creation of a homogenous nation through the conceptualisation of civic nationalism was aided by the Kemalist secularisation of the state. Again this was a reaction against the Empire’s collapse. The entrenchment of religion within the political system of the Empire, through the ulema, the tarikats and the millet system, was perceived as one of the Empire’s weaknesses. It was regarded as hindering the integration of peoples and reducing their loyalty to the regime. An acknowledgement of these realities had begun in the latter days of Ottoman rule beginning with the Tanzimat reforms and especially following the Young Turks period in 1908-1918.<sup>5</sup> However, secularism was more radically embraced with the establishment of the Republic. It became one of the principal ‘arrows’ of Kemalism guiding the development of the new state. Early reforms included the abolition of the Caliphate, the Sharia courts and the Ministry for Religious Affairs in 1924, the ban on the tarikats in 1925, the outlawing of the fez and the discouraged use of the veil.

Kemalist secularism entailed two distinct elements. First, religion was kept out of state decisions. Second, the state actively attempted to reduce the role played by religion in private lives. Religion was viewed as a potential threat to the Kemalist nation-state. It was thus either discouraged or attentively controlled by the Directorate of Religious Affairs. In the military establishment for example, arguably the most Kemalist of all Turkish official institutions, religion has been explicitly discouraged particularly in the last decade. Between January 1995 and August 2000, 745 serving officers were dismissed from the military predominantly for suspected Islamist sympathies.<sup>6</sup>

While Kemalism theoretically endorsed an enlightened vision of civic nationalism, in practice distinct ethnic elements were incorporated in the understanding of the Turkish nation. Specific ethnic undertones in the articulation of the Turkish nation began to emerge at the

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<sup>4</sup> See Lerner, D. (1958), *The Passing of Traditional Societies*.

<sup>5</sup> See Rustow, D.A. and Ward, R.E. (1964), *Political Modernisation In Japan and Turkey*.

<sup>6</sup> Jenkins, G. (2001), *Context and Circumstance: The Turkish Military and Politics*, pp.28.

time of Atatürk. The population transfers with Greece on the basis of religion and the institutionalisation of an education system insisting upon the Turkification of all groups highlighted the distinctively ethnic elements of Turkish nationalism and nationhood. These elements have persisted to this day. An extract of former President Demirel's speech in July 1997 at the opening ceremony of the centre of Turkish Hearths illustrates this point:

The people who established this Republic are Turks. Where this country was established is Turkey and the official language of this country is Turkish. Everyone should pay the utmost attention to the concepts I have mentioned. They are the guarantee of peace, trust and happiness in this country.<sup>7</sup>

Kemalism in practice did thus not try to create a new Turkish nation based solely upon citizenship and state loyalty. Rather it attempted to assimilate diverse ethnicities into an ethnically Turkish nation.

Before proceeding it is however important to note that this potentially dangerous mixture between civic and ethnic conceptualisations of the nation are not at all unique to Turkey. A notable example in this respect is France. The revolt against the ancien regime and the establishment of the Republican state led to the development of the concept of citizenship and state loyalty, which in turn was accompanied by the practice of 'Frenchification' of disparate groups. The internal contradictions of this model became increasingly apparent from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century particularly in view of the large immigration flows from North Africa in particular. Jewish or Arab immigrants as well as Bretons and Corsicans increasingly called for the articulation of their separate identities. To some extent these could be freely expressed through the full respect for individual freedoms of expression, religion or association. Yet the denial of full minority status led to persisting pressures for change towards a fully multicultural society.

## **2.2 The Kemalist nation-state and the non-Turkish Sunni Muslim population**

The combination of a theoretically civic understanding of the nation coupled with specific ethnic interpretations of it in practice have proved to be a dangerous combination opening the way to assimilation and discrimination. In some instances minority ethnic and religious groups succeeded in integrating into the new Turkish nation and thus enjoyed the same status of Turkish Sunni Muslim citizens. However in other cases, unwillingness or perhaps an

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<sup>7</sup> Turkish Hearths Open Centre in Balgat, Turkish Daily News (21/07/1997).

inability<sup>8</sup> to integrate into the new environment have led to serious pressures for change. These have at times been expressed through violent and destabilising action. A brief analysis of the conditions of different groups, including Kurdish, Alevi Shiite, Christian, Jewish and other non-Turkish Muslim citizens living in Turkey illustrates this point.

### *The Kurdish population*

The Kurdish population of Turkey can be distinguished by the ethnic Turkish population primarily by their use of Kurdish, of which the Kurmanci dialect is the most prominent. Up until recently mentioning the existence of a separate Kurdish origin of Turkish citizens was taboo in Turkey. Unlike Christian and Jewish communities, the Muslim population was treated as a homogenous whole. Furthermore, citizens of Kurdish origin were regarded as having Turanian origins and as such being ethnic Turks. They were simply labelled ‘mountain Turks’, i.e., Turks who as a consequence of their isolated lifestyle in the Anatolian hinterlands had developed separate dialects and needed to be re-educated about their ‘Turkishness’. Elements of a separate Kurdish identity were erased by banning the use of Kurdish names, restricting the use of the Kurdish language and ‘Turkifying’ place names in the Southeast. The Turkish state also discarded any proposition of Kurdish minority rights for the Kurdish population or autonomy on the grounds that it would institutionalise ethnic division and prevent the Kurdish assimilation into the Turkish ‘melting pot’.

Some Kurds, particularly those living in the more developed western parts of the country accepted assimilation into the Turkish nation. A few of those who did, succeeded in reaching high-ranking positions in the business and political worlds. Former prime minister and president Turgut Özal and former speaker of the Turkish General Assembly, Hikmat Çetin are some examples. However, those who attempted to articulate a separate identity and rejected ‘Turkification’ were repressed.

Until the 1960s the Kurdish population remained largely unconscious of its separate identity. The Kurdish revolts of the 1920s and 30s were effectively religious wars fought by the Kurds against Kemalist secularisation and not separatist insurrections based upon the consciousness of a distinctive Kurdish identity. However, by the 1960s, the Kurdish people, partly influenced by the Kurdish nationalist movement of Mulla Mustafa Barzani in Northern Iraq, began acknowledging their separate identity. The Kurdish nationalist movement was initially

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<sup>8</sup> For example due to particular socio-economic conditions such as those of the undeveloped and neglected south-east.

associated to Marxist groupings such as the Turkish Workers Party in the 1960s. With the disenchantment with communism in the 1990s, the Kurdish nationalist cause became more closely associated with some of the socio-economic ideas of political Islam.

The awakening of a separate Kurdish identity has been manifested in different forms. The most striking and well-known movement has been the separatist PKK led by Abdullah Öcalan. The PKK movement aimed at achieving an independent Kurdistan based upon Marxist-Leninist principles. These objectives were pursued in the 1980s and 1990s principally through a vicious armed struggle directed by the Kurdistan National Liberation Army (ARGK) and the Kurdistan National Liberation Front (ERNK) against all perceived agents of the state often including ordinary civilians and village guards. The Kurdish movement has also included a non-violent 'soft opposition' including parties such as HEP, OZDEP, DEP, DKP and HADEP. These movements (of which only the latter survives but whose representation in Parliament is resisted) articulate the desire of many Kurdish citizens to be recognised as such and to be able to organise themselves freely. No specific demand is even being put forward for Kurdish political autonomy or for the federalisation of the Republic.

#### *The Shiite Alevi population*

While the majority of the Turkish population belongs to the Hanefi School of Sunni Islam, approximately 20% of the Muslim population are Shiite Alevi principally of the Bekta'i School.

The Alevi population was generally strongly supportive of the Kemalist revolution and particularly of its secularisation reforms. Representing a religious minority, the Alevis viewed Kemalism as a positive shift away from Ottoman Empire based upon religious and thus Sunni rule. But since the 1970s, the Alevi's separate religious identity has been voiced more strongly with the growth of political Islam in Turkish politics. Through leftist political movements such as TIKKO in the 1970s, the Alevi population criticised state policies. Criticism was often directed towards the Directorate of Religious Affairs that explicitly paid almost exclusive attention to the Sunni population. The killings in Gaziosmanpa'a in 1995 were a tragic illustration of tensions between the Alevi leftist movements and the fundamentalist Sunni Islamists. The 1993 events in Sivas instead clearly demonstrated discriminatory state attitudes towards the Alevi population.



*The Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish population*

Small Christian and Jewish communities which remained in Turkey following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire were accorded minority status in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. As such they were conceded specific religious and cultural rights in articles 38-44 of the Treaty. Nonetheless, the ethnic undertones of Turkish nationalism affected their living conditions. In the early years of the Republic, the state discouraged Greek or Armenian schools, it made primary education in Turkish compulsory, it imposed high quotas of Turkish staff and capital in firms and it opened several professions exclusively to ethnic Turks. One of the most evident cases of discrimination against non-Muslim communities was in 1942 when capital tax levels were set according to religious affiliation. This highly discriminatory policy on the grounds of religion was directly aimed at harming the prosperous Jewish and Armenian business in particular. Discrimination and community right violations were also evident with the destruction of several Byzantine and Armenian monuments and churches.

Although the numbers of Jews in Turkey has been consistently declining over the decades, it should be noted that the treatment of the Jewish population has been distinctively better than that of the Greeks or the Armenians. The difference between the treatment of Greeks and Armenians on the one hand and Jews on the other could be explained by two principal factors. First and most important, the Jews were not only less numerous than the Greeks and the Armenians, but unlike the latter they did not pose what was perceived to be a territorial threat to the new Turkish state. Jews were not linked to a hostile motherland country at Turkey's borders. Israel was never to be an enemy of the Turkish state. The case of the Greeks and Armenians was distinctively different. Turkey and Greece have been at loggerheads over various territorial questions, and most importantly the future status of the island of Cyprus. Discriminatory actions such as the expulsion of 6,000 Greeks from Turkey and the confiscation of the property of 8,000 Greeks in Anatolia and Istanbul in the mid-1960s for example was to a large extent a retaliation against the constitutional breakdown on Cyprus in those years. The treatment of the Greeks in Turkey was the result of endemic ethnic nationalism compounded by the specific impetus of the Cyprus situation. The case of the Armenians is somewhat similar. The question of recognition of the 1915 Armenian genocide and Armenia's persistent reference to many Turkish provinces as 'western Armenia', creates considerable anxiety in Turkey and fuels Turkey's discriminatory treatment of Turkish Armenians.

Second, the Jews appeared to be more ready to integrate in Turkish society. The Turkish Jews, while retaining their specific identity, were generally sympathetic towards and ready to integrate into the Turkish Republic. Many of them had taken refuge in the Ottoman Empire following their persecution in Western Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As such they appeared ready to integrate in Turkish society. This was not the case of the Greeks or the Armenians. Particularly in the early days of Greek independence, the Greek state to a large extent articulated a sense of national identity in opposition to Turkey given the successful struggle for independence against the Ottoman occupation in the 1820s. In the case of the Armenians, particularly since independence in 1991, the rehabilitation of a sense of national identity has been aided by an opposition to Turkey as the ‘other’ and in particular by the international campaign for the recognition of the 1915 genocide.

#### *Other non-Turkish Muslim communities in Turkey*

Other cases highlighting the issues affecting the treatment of non-Turkish/Sunni groups in Turkey are those of several non-Turkish Muslim peoples such as the Laz from Georgia, the Circassians from the North Caucasus, the Hem<sup>o</sup>ilis and the Albanian population. All of these groups have effectively integrated voluntarily into the Turkish nation. Like most other non-Turkish communities in the country the use of their separate languages has been either banned or severely restricted. However, the ‘Turkification’ of these peoples has been in most cases facilitated by their willingness to fully integrate in the Turkish nation. Like the Turkish Jews, many of these peoples had escaped persecution, in their case from Russia and the Christian countries of the Caucasus. In Turkey they thus viewed themselves as proud defendants of Islam in the mixed Black Sea area.

The integration of these peoples into the Turkish nation at least partially invalidates one of the repeatedly stated Turkish arguments against autonomy for the Kurdish population or a move away from the unitary state model in general. The Turkish civilian and military elite has often voiced its concern that federalisation or political autonomy in Turkey would lead to a disintegration of the nation-state because it would trigger separatist demands from a multitude of ethnic groups. Yet the current positions of most other non-Turkish Muslim communities in Turkey does not point towards the existence of many other demands for autonomy bubbling beneath the surface. Apart from a few cases, there appears to be little ground for believing that other non-Turkish Muslim groups would gravitate towards separatism following federalisation or devolution in Turkey. The state’s outright refusal to contemplate

federalisation or minority rights can be explained more by its conception of the Turkish nation and its fear of disintegration, together with the instability of Turkish coalition party politics, than by the objective assessment of the situation on the ground.

Hence, partly as a reaction to the Ottoman experience and the fear of disintegration, the Kemalist revolution in Turkey instilled upon the people of Anatolia a particular vision of the Turkish nation-state. This was to be a homogenous, fixed and indivisible whole. The conceptualisation of the nation state as a civic construct and the secularisation of the state fitted these requirements. However, in reality specific ethnic undertones of the understanding of the Turkish nation were clearly visible. Attempting to assimilate the non-Turkish non-Sunni-Muslim population into this model has often led to discriminatory policies and human and community right violations. In turn these led to important pressures for change. This has occurred particularly in the cases of minority groups who either failed to integrate in Turkish society such as the Kurds or who were connected to hostile mother countries such as the Armenians or the Greeks.

### **2.3 The Kemalist nation-state and political Islam**

Another source of pressure and instability has come from political Islam. As in the case of pressures from particular minority groups, also political Islam could be in part explained as a reaction against the particular interpretation of the Kemalist nation-state. Islam began penetrating the secularised political system as a result of the politicisation of the masses in the 1950s and 1960s. The Islamic identity of the people was nurtured by the growth of the Na<sup>o</sup>kebendi and Nurcu movements, aiming to educate followers in the conduct of a correct Islamic life. Also the Imam Hatip Lisesi, which originally intended to educate and train prayer leaders, increasingly played a significant role in the Islamisation of the public. They were in turn strengthened by the increasing influence of Islam in the Turkish polity.

Aware of the persisting salience of religion as part of popular identity, traditional secular ruling parties began endorsing Islam as a means to widen their electoral appeal. After Republican Peoples Party (CHP) leader Ismet Inönü opened the party system to the Democrat Party opposition in 1946, Islam began entering political discourse.<sup>9</sup> Both the CHP and the Democrat and Justice Parties were effectively moderate ‘catch-all’ parties, which rejected any

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<sup>9</sup> See Ahmad, F. (1977), *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy*.

class or sectarian connotation and advocated a nationalist mixed economy.<sup>10</sup> Yet while the CHP was linked to the state apparatus core, the Democrat and Justice Parties theoretically stood for the periphery. As such, they attempted to appeal to the Islamic identity of the people. During the 1950s and 1960s first during the Democrat rule and following the 1960 coup with the reformed Justice Party, Islam became instrumentalised by governing party to attract the increasingly politicised electorate. Islam was also present during the military rule of the early 1980s. Following the years of chaos and instability in the 1970s, the military paradoxically attempted to re-educate the people and restore the foundations of the Kemalist system through the 'Turkish Islamic Synthesis' (TIS). Retaining the concept of TIS, Islam was again present during Turgut Özal's Motherland Party's (ANAP) rule in the 1980s.

Yet the introduction of Islam into the discourse of traditional governing parties did not imply an automatic growth of political Islam and thus did not represent a sharp turn away from secular Kemalism. Kemalist military and populist political circles recognised that Islam represented one of the facets of Turkish identity and accepted the electoral value of reflecting this in political discourse. The military in particular selectively used Islam as an antidote against instability and thus as a means to preserve the Kemalist regime.

An entirely different phenomenon, which instead has represented a fundamental threat to the traditional Kemalist system, has been the rise of political Islam. Reacting against the Western and secular veneer of Kemalism, political Islam began penetrating the Turkish political system in the early 1970s and attracting increasing electoral support. In 1970 Necmettin Erbakan formed the Islamic National Order Party (MNP), which was disbanded after the 1971 military memorandum. The party reformed in 1972 as the National Salvation Party (MSP). The MSP played a crucial role in the coalition politics of the 1970s. Having succeeded together with the nationalist right wing National Order Party in eroding the electoral base of the dominant Justice Party, the MSP actively participated in several governing arrangements during the unstable years of the 1970s. Given the historic rivalry between the dominant CHP and the Justice Party preventing a grand coalition between the two, these traditional parties formed coalition governments with extreme parties including Erbakan's Islamic movement.

The electoral success of political Islam increased further in the 1990s. Following the years of military regime in the early 1980s and the return to restricted party competition later that decade, the reopening of party competition in the 1990s witnessed the phenomenal rise of

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<sup>10</sup> Dodd, C.H. (1969), *Politics and Government in Turkey* pp.25.

Erbakan's reformed Islamic party, the Welfare Party (RP). At the 1995 elections the RP won the highest share of the vote gaining the support of 21.4% of the electorate. Following an initial attempt to exclude Refah from government, the party formed a governing coalition with Tansu Çiller's True Path Party in 1996. Erbakan himself led the coalition until shortly after the military's soft coup of February 28 1997. At the 1989 municipal elections the RP's mayoral candidates were elected in five large cities and 100 towns. In the 1994 municipal elections Mr Erdoğan and Mr Gökçek of the RP were elected as mayors of Istanbul and Ankara respectively. Support for political Islam appears to have subsided since the fall of the Erbakan government. Electoral support fell considerably during the 1999 general elections and since then the reformed Virtue Party has been ridden by internal divisions. Nonetheless, the party continues to attract an important segment of the electorate. Furthermore, the nationalist and moderate Islamic movement of Fetullah Gulen has been attracting support from over one million Turks in recent years, encouraging traditional Kemalist politicians including Prime Minister Ecevit himself to establish relations with Gulen.

The rise of political Islam in Turkey since the 1970s thus remains a second threat and source of instability in the Republic together with that posed by some minority groups which have failed to integrate in the Turkish nation. Above it has been argued that both political Islam and separatist pressures can at least be partly explained as a reaction against the conception of a civic and secular Turkish nation. Both sources of pressure have represented seriously destabilising factors in the political life of the country.

#### **2.4 The Kemalist nation-state and the concept of ethnic kin in Turkish foreign policy**

The concept of Turkish nationalism and identity have had also a significant impact upon the conduct of foreign policy. This has been the case particularly since the end of the Cold War. Together with traditional security and economic concerns, identity has been an important pillar driving the conduct of Turkish foreign policy. It should be clarified here that any form of irredentism has been rejected outright by Turkey since its foundation. As mentioned earlier, conscious of the problems caused by Ottoman expansionism, the Republic has traditionally adopted a cautious foreign policy. However, while formally recognising that Turks comprise all and only the inhabitants of the modern day Republic, Turkish foreign

policy has paid an important eye of regard towards what are viewed as ethnic kin in other countries.<sup>11</sup> Foreign policy towards Azerbaijan and Cyprus are two notable examples.

*Turkish foreign policy towards Azerbaijan*

In the case of Turkish-Azeri relations, strategic and economic factors have naturally played an important role in shaping Turkish policies. Strong Turkish-Azeri relations would allow Turkey to gain a foothold in the strategically and economically crucial Caspian region. Most important is the question of transportation of Caspian oil and gas. Turkey naturally has significant economic interests in the construction of the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline transporting Azeri and possibly a portion of Kazakh oil to the Mediterranean coast with an initial capacity of 1m bpd. Caspian gas transportation is also crucially important. Turkey is interested not only in the transportation of Russian gas to Turkey through the Blue Stream route across the Black Sea, but also and the transportation of Turkmen gas through the Transcaucasus Energy Corridor. This may be further complemented with the transportation of recently found offshore gas in the Shah Deniz field of Azerbaijan that could amount to 20 bcm/y. by 2010.

However, close ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan also have a strong ethnic kin dimension. The newly independent state of Azerbaijan is linked to Turkey through close ties of language and ethnicity. Such ties and particular language ties have strengthened following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the increased contact between the two countries.

Ethnic ties together with the historical Turkish-Armenian enmity have strongly affected Turkey's attitude towards the Azeri-Armenian conflict over the Soviet Azeri autonomous oblast of Nagorno Karabakh. Turkey has discouraged any form of irredentism in Azerbaijan and has openly supported neither the idea of a land swap as a means of settling the dispute nor the rumours in Azerbaijan proposing the creation of a Turkish-Azeri federation, confederation or union. Nonetheless, following the Armenian victory of the 1988-94 Karabakh war and the Armenian occupation of approximately 20% of Azeri territory, Turkey has expressed its overwhelming support for Azerbaijan. This has taken the form of severed diplomatic contacts with Armenia and the blockade of Turkey's eastern frontier with Armenia.

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<sup>11</sup> See Landau, J (2000), *Pan Turkism*.

*Turkish foreign policy towards Cyprus*

Turkish foreign policy towards Cyprus also illustrates the fundamental importance of ethnic kin as a factor affecting Turkish foreign policy. Strategic security and economic concerns are naturally important in shaping Turkish attitudes towards the Cyprus question. Cyprus has often been described as the ‘dagger pointing at the heart of Turkey’, given its strategic position only 40 miles away from the coast of Southern Anatolia. A Greek domination of the island is viewed as posing an important security threat to Turkey, particularly by the Turkish military. Nowadays the strategic military importance of Cyprus is probably overestimated. Nonetheless, the eastern Mediterranean island is also critical for economic considerations given the role of Cyprus in controlling the oil traffic from the Bay of Iskenderun, either with the resumption of oil flows from Iraq following the lifting of international sanctions or with the construction of Baku-Ceyhan pipeline.

However, ethnic ties with the Turkish Cypriot community and the deep-rooted concern for minority Turkish Cypriot brothers on the island are crucial both in shaping public opinion and civilian government positions on the Cyprus conflict. In addition to a military presence of over 30,000 Turkish troops in northern Cyprus and the considerable financial support to the economically blockaded north, Turkey has been the only state recognising the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, it consistently supports fully Rauf Denktao’ negotiating position advocating the recognition of two separate sovereign states on the island and has repeatedly condemned EU policy on the accession of the Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus. It should be noted that the Turkish Government’s proposal for its National Programme as a response to the Union’s Accession Partnership Document explicitly states that it would support the UN Secretary General’s efforts to bring about peace on Cyprus on the basis of a ‘new partnership in Cyprus based on the sovereign equality of the two parties and the realities on the island’<sup>12</sup>. Despite EU pressure, Turkey has not shifted its position on Cyprus.

## **2.5 Resisting threats to the nation-state: repression and the role of the military in politics**

But the EU’s complaints do not simply stem from the Turkish authorities’ conceptualisation and implementation of the nation-state and nationalism. They are related more to the authoritarian and often human rights violating manner in which civilian and military elites

<sup>12</sup> Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (03/2001) *EU National Programme: Introduction and Political Criteria (Unofficial translation)*.

have resisted some of the real and perceived threats analysed above. The state's imposition of a particular vision of the nation has often been at odds with the demands of certain segments of the population. This has led to an alienation of particular segments and subsequent destabilising pressures for change. In reaction to such pressures the state has often adopted authoritarian and repressive policies. These have caused important flaws in Turkey's democracy and human rights record.

The Kemalist revolution, like all revolutionary changes in the past century, was conducted in a relatively authoritarian manner. While paying lip service to the notions of republicanism and to a lesser extent democracy, the latter did not feature highly if at all during Atatürk's rule itself. A radically new political system was effectively imposed upon the people, allowing a paradoxical survival of authoritarian Ottoman modes of governance in the new Republic. During Atatürk's rule in Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s, and up and until 1946, the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP) ruled unchallenged given the closure of the party system to multi-party competition.

Initially this autocratic style may have been explained and justified by the nature and extent of revolutionary change. No revolution has been ever carried effectively through normal liberal democratic procedures. However, authoritarian and repressive governance appears to have survived to some extent throughout almost one century of republicanism. Traditional elites, contradicting the spirit of Kemalist theory and determined to preserve the indivisible and homogeneous nation-state, have often resorted to explicitly repressive measures.<sup>13</sup>

The role of the military is particularly relevant in this respect. Since the foundation of the Republic, law and tradition entrusted the military the key tasks of ensuring the survival of the Kemalist state and nation against both internal and external threats. During its interventions in the political life of the country, the military never attempted to install a permanent military regime and always left peacefully following its interventions. Rather, as guardian of the Kemalist system, the military attempted to re-impose through authoritarian means what it believed to be the 'right democratic order'.<sup>14</sup> Hence, the military interventions of 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997.

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<sup>13</sup> See Karpat, K.H. (1973), *Social Change and Politics in Turkey*.

<sup>14</sup> For the role of the military in Turkey see Birand, M.A. (1987), *The Generals' Coup in Turkey: and Inside Story of 12 September 1980*, Brown, J. (1987), 'The Military and Politics in Turkey', *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol3, No.2, pp.235-253, Hale, W. (1994), *Turkish Politics and the Military* and Karakartal, B. (1985), 'Turkey: The Army as



But apart from these extreme measures, the military retains a permanent voice in the political development of the Republic particularly through its presence in the National Security Council (MGK). The role of the MGK was introduced in the 1961 Constitution. It was to act as an advisory body on questions related to national security and was composed of five military and five civilian members. Its status was further enhanced under the 1982 Constitution by both adopting a broader definition of national security<sup>15</sup> and by stressing that the MGK's opinions were to be given 'priority consideration' by the Council of Ministers. The MGK, is theoretically a consultative body. However in practice it has considerable authority. While it may have difficulties in actively initiating policy, politicians will rarely make a decision, which contradicts its opinions.<sup>16</sup> The judicial system is also strongly influenced by the military, where up until June 1999 a military judge sat in state security courts dealing with alleged 'crimes against the indivisible integrity of the State, with its territory and nation, the free democratic order, or against the Republic, whose characteristics are defined in the Constitution, and offences directly involving the internal and external security of the State'.<sup>17</sup>

The presence of the military in Turkey's political life sheds doubt upon the democratic credentials of the country. But this is not necessarily because the military is not popularly elected. In fact it should be noted that opinion polls have repeatedly shown that the military ranks as the most trusted institution amongst the Turkish public. A December 1996 survey reported that 81.3% of those questioned trusted the armed forces compared to 16.6% who declared they trusted politicians.<sup>18</sup> Arguably the role of the military in Turkish political life is questionable in so far as it has facilitated the institutionalisation of repressive measures and human right violations. This has been the case particularly since the 1980 coup and the acceptance of the 1982 Constitution, the Penal Code, the Law Against Terrorism and the Political Parties Law. Many of the legal provisions included have been employed to curb

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Guardians of the Political Order', in Clapham, C. and Philip, G. (eds.), *The Political Dilemmas of Military Regimes*.

<sup>15</sup> National security questions effectively comprise all issues related to 'the preservation of the existence and independence of the State, the integrity and indivisibility of the country and the peace and security of society' [www.mfa.gov.tr](http://www.mfa.gov.tr).

<sup>16</sup> Jenkins, G. (2001), *Context and Circumstance: The Turkish Military and Politics*.

<sup>17</sup> Article 143 of the 1982 Constitution [www.mfa.gov.tr](http://www.mfa.gov.tr).

<sup>18</sup> Opinion poll by Polar Research, *Zamam* (09/04/2000).

through force and suppression any attempts to challenge the integrity of the unitary and homogenous nation-state.<sup>19</sup>

Both the military and political and judicial establishment in different ways and through different means have been determined to resist all internal and external threats to the integrity of the country and to fight all challenges to the Kemalist conception of the nation-state. The authoritarian and repressive means to tackle what were and are perceived to be fundamental threats to the nation-state will be explored by reviewing state policies towards the Kurdish question and political Islam.

### *Resisting the threat of Political Islam*

Turning first to political Islam, the most radical step taken to curb through repressive means the power and influence of political Islam was through the ‘soft coup’ of 1997 which effectively triggered the collapse of the Erbakan-Çiller coalition government. By January 1997 Prime Minister Erbakan began advancing more explicitly an Islamic agenda. He proposed amendments of public office hours to facilitate the respect of Ramadan rules and established links with leaders of Islamic sects that had been explicitly banned by Atatürk. The military thus proceeded to draw up a package of reforms to curb the spread of political Islam. On 28 February the 18-point package was presented at the MGK. The government was effectively forced to accept the measures although it delayed their implementation, fearing the alienation of its electorate. Pressure on the coalition from the military as well as from civilian Kemalist elites persisted until the government resigned in June 1997.

At the same time, the military, political and judicial establishments took measures to dissolve the RP in 1998 according to articles 68 and 69 of the Political Parties Law for having become a ‘focal point’ in Turkish anti-secular activities. In addition, the provisions of Article 312 of the Penal Code severely restricting freedom of expression were employed to ensure the imprisonment of RP Mayor Erdoğan after a speech in Siirt in 1997, accused of having ‘incited hatred amongst the people.’ The same article has been called upon to push for the imprisonment of Erbakan himself. By restricting the scope of legal political activity, and by curbing the freedom of expression, the state has thus confronted an essentially ideological and political confrontation through repressive and undemocratic legal action. A secular

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<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the 1982 Constitution see Harris, G.S. (1985) *Turkey: Coping with Crisis*.

understanding of the Turkish nation-state has led political and military elites to confront political Islam through legal exclusion and repression.

*Resisting the threat of Kurdish separatist and cultural demands*

Repressive and often human right violating measures have been employed to suppress the emerging Kurdish identity and different expressions of Kurdish separatism. Up until 1991, Law 2932 of 1983 banned the use of Kurdish in public life and penalised its use in private life. With the 1995 reform of article 8 of the Anti Terror Law the use of the Kurdish language is no longer an automatic legal offence. Nonetheless, many legal provisions remain which severely restrict the use of Kurdish. Under law 3984, Kurdish TV and radio broadcasting remain severely restricted, teaching in Kurdish is still banned and Kurdish cannot be used as an official language in the southeast. It must be noted however that Undersecretary Senkal Atasagun and Deputy Undersecretary Mikdat Alpay of the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) recently suggested that Kurdish state broadcasting could serve as a means to win back the loyalty of the Kurdish speaking population, whose resistance to the state has been fuelled by their unique exposure to illegal Kurdish propaganda.<sup>20</sup> Finally, as a result of the persisting state of emergency in several districts of the southeast, the legal system also allows for further restrictions of fundamental rights and freedoms in these areas. For example under law 424 of 1990; governors of state of emergency regions have the right to close printing presses, to implement forcible resettlement of persons and to arbitrarily increase prison sentences.

Since 1984 the military has also been involved in physically suppressing Kurdish insurgency. Over the last two decades with the initiation of the Kurdish guerrilla warfare ruthlessly attacking both state agents and presumed civilian supporters of the state, fighting between Turkish armed forces and PKK fighters both in Turkey and in Northern Iraq have effectively claimed the lives of over 30,000 civilians and soldiers, the evacuation of more than 3,000 settlements and villages in the south-east and the displacing approximately 1.5 million people.<sup>21</sup> The Turkish armed struggle against PKK terrorism can to some extent be justified. The PKK is involved in terrorist activities and has caused considerable death and human suffering. But the Turkish elite has also reacted strongly against peaceful political movements attempting to articulate other facets of the Kurdish cause by accusing them of ties with terrorist organisations. In the 1990s the state outlawed many pro-Kurdish parties including the

<sup>20</sup> Turkish Daily News (30/11/00).

<sup>21</sup> Jenkins, G. (2001) *Context and Circumstance: The Turkish Military and Politics*, pp.68.

HEP, DEP, DKP and OZDEP. It persists in imposing severe imitations in the political activities of HADEP accusing the party of having ‘organic’ ties with the PKK.

However, it should be noted that Turkish public opinion by and large supports the state’s attitude towards Kurdish separatism. It supports the state’s armed reaction against the PKK in the light of the massacres committed by the latter against Turkish civilians. It also accepts the attitudes towards the ‘soft’ Kurdish front given this is often viewed as a mere front for the radical PKK.

### **3. The future of Turkey-EU relations**

An understanding of Turkey’s political context is crucial to a fair and realistic assessment of the issues touched upon in both the EU Accession Partnership Document and the European Parliament ‘Morillon Report’ mentioning Cyprus, the Kurdish question and Turkish-Armenian relations.<sup>22</sup>

The above discussion has suggested that the often undemocratic and human rights violating means of enforcing a particular interpretation of the Kemalist nation-state are a result of a specific understanding of the past and a deep-rooted desire to create a viable political entity within a hostile and unstable environment. Understanding the context of particular political shortcomings and problems does not imply a justification of the latter. Nonetheless, understanding is crucial in the formulation of realistic and constructive policies of conditionality in Europe towards Turkey as well as the determination of realistic Turkish aims and objectives vis-à-vis the EU.

#### **3.1 Turkish attitudes towards the EU**

Turning first to the second issue, the changes required in Turkey to effectively transform its political system in accordance to EU models can only take place gradually over the course of a few decades and will require a committed, strong and stable political leadership. The political changes Turkey would have to undergo in order to comply with European standards go well beyond the passing of important laws to abolish the death penalty, allow Kurdish broadcasting or supporting the UN efforts to bring about a solution to the Cyprus problem. In the long run they would imply all-encompassing reform to re-conceptualise the Turkish nation and the functioning of the Turkish state. Such an extensive reform could only be successfully

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<sup>22</sup> European Parliament (19/10/2000), Report on the 1999 Regular Report from the Commission on Turkey's progress towards accession.

undertaken over the medium to long-term and would require a strong and stable leadership, committed to the European goal.

The rhetoric of Kemalist civilian and military elite has historically been extremely pro-European. Westernisation was and remains a fundamental feature of Kemalism. Again as a reaction against the Ottoman past, the Kemalist revolution sought a mode of development which drew the new Republic towards Europe and away from the Islamic and undeveloped Middle East. Atatürk's reforms in dress codes, his adoption of the Latin alphabet and the Gregorian calendar and his formulation of a civil, penal and commercial code and a constitution based upon several West European models all illustrate the founding father's attempts to set Turkey along the path to Westernisation. The military and political elite's unquestioned desire to join the EU is a persisting legacy of traditional Kemalist thinking. The European Union, associated to Europe itself, is regarded as the ultimate aim culminating the Kemalist revolution and is often present in domestic political debate.

However, moving beyond the rhetoric, Turkish elite so far have on a whole proved reluctant to embark upon all-encompassing political reform. Since, the 1999 Helsinki decision to accept Turkey as a candidate to EU accession, while economic reform has proceeded, little political and constitutional reform has been undertaken. Debate in Turkey on the need for reform has been ardent, particularly with respects to salient questions such as the abolition of the death penalty, the liberalisation of freedom of expression and the closing down of political parties. Turkey has also recently signed the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This is no doubt strongly linked to the Helsinki decision.

However, substantive political reform has been slow to come. The influence and accountability of the National Security Council has remained unchanged, state security courts have not undergone recent reforms in the last year, cases of torture and ill-treatment in prisons persist, freedom of expression and association remain seriously limited and the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities has not yet been signed. Furthermore, Turkish elite criticised sharply some EU recommendations for domestic political reform in the Accession Partnership Document particularly those concerning Kurdish

rights. As Kramer puts it, state elite's attitudes and actions suggest that what Turkey wants is a platonic rather than a real membership of the EU.<sup>23</sup>

As EU-Turkey relations deepen and Turkey is called to respond to EU demands with substantial political reform, it will have to resolve itself upon whether it truly committed to undergo a fundamental political revolution in order to become a full EU member. The analysis above has attempted to show that preparing for EU membership would effectively shake the Republic at its foundations, and is thus bound to entail a slow and difficult process. Both the elite and the public should thus seriously debate the essence of the EU and its compatibility with the Turkish political system and goals. So far political circles and the mass media appear to have rarely debated EU accession in terms of its costs and benefits. Generally they have tended to skim over the detail of how the European Union functions and how Turkey would effectively need to transform the nature of its state and nation in order to adapt to the 'European model'. Even those who object to EU membership tend to do so in opposition to the traditional cause of Westernisation. They rarely discuss whether Turkey is willing and ready to endorse the EU model for what it truly is and not for what it represents to traditional Kemalists.

Two crucial issues require particular attention and debate. First, is the question of sovereignty within the Union. Several political speeches in Turkey suggest that Turkey could be an active and co-operative participant of the EU like it is in other international organisations. However, EU membership is a radically different experience from membership of international organisations such as NATO. EU accession would entail the acceptance of majority voting in most EU policy areas, it would involve a constant scrutinisation into the internal affairs of the country and it would include some form of regionalisation at least as far as questions such as structural funds and regional policy are concerned. The extent to which the transfer of sovereignty to EU institutions would be compatible with Turkish traditions thus needs to be addressed.

Another question relates to the transformation of the understanding of Turkish nationhood. Within the EU, even countries such as France, mother of civic nationalism and adamant supporter of the homogenous and organic nation, have begun acknowledging the complex make-up of ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity within state borders. Turkey's membership of the EU would probably require a similar acknowledgement and thus an effective

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<sup>23</sup> Kramer, H. (2000) *A Changing Turkey: the Challenge of Europe and the US*, pp. 201.

abandonment of the traditional interpretation of the Turkish nation. This could begin with the full implementation of article 39 of the Lausanne Treaty, which while not mentioning minority rights states that ‘no restrictions shall be imposed on the free use by any Turkish national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, in religion, in the press, or in publications of any kind or at public meetings’.<sup>24</sup> Thereafter reform could include the extension of the Lausanne articles referring to non-Muslim minorities to non-Turkish Muslim groups such as the Kurds. The extent to which Turkey is willing to acknowledge its multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society and most importantly draw the necessary political conclusions<sup>25</sup> from such a revised conception of the nation is open to debate. A transformation of the understanding of the Turkish nation appears to be underway, although the accompanying changes in the functioning of the state have been slow to materialise.

EU membership would effectively imply abandoning the traditional interpretation of Kemalism and embracing a 21<sup>st</sup> century re-conceptualisation of the Kemalist vision 78 years following the foundation of the state. At this stage it is not yet clear whether Turkey is truly committed to undergo what may be defined as a second revolution of the Republic. Is Turkey willing to abandon many of its political assumptions and practices in order to seek an aim, which implies a re-conceptualisation of the Kemalist Republic?

### **3.2 The unavailability of political reform in Turkey**

Important reasons suggest that all-encompassing political reform is inevitable and that enlightened political circles in Turkey are acknowledging this reality. The EU accession process and ultimate EU membership could thus serve as the appropriate anchor and incentive for Turkey to undergo the necessary reform.

The Kemalist revolution set Turkey along the path of political and economic development. Yet it succeeded precisely because Turkey was not yet a modernised country. The Kemalist revolution was effectively an elite exercise that initially left the periphery, particularly the rural population of Anatolia, largely unaffected. Up until the 1960s the normal political pattern was one of low politicisation despite high electoral turnout. High electoral turnout particularly in rural areas could be explained more by peasant votes reflecting intra-village rivalries between local notables rather than by general political affiliations. Kemalism was

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<sup>24</sup> Article 39 *Treaty of Lausanne* (1923).

<sup>25</sup> by accepting reforms such as regionalisation or minority cultural, religious and language rights.

thus able to impose upon the public a particular conception of the nation-state and a model of economic development.

Yet the success of Kemalist modernisation has inevitably called for a reinterpretation of its traditional approach. Modernisation and urbanisation in Turkey have triggered the politicisation of the masses, the articulation of heterogeneous identities and the development of a Turkish civil society willing to influence policy-making.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the Turkish public has been exposed more recently to the various facets of globalisation, which has further encouraged the manifestation of heterogeneous identities and demands. These developments have provided the underlying causes of two of the fundamental challenges to the traditional conception of the Turkish nation-state analysed above: the Kurdish question and political Islam.

First, modernisation and politicisation can to a large extent explain the rise of political Islam in Turkey. As the public became increasingly politicised the gap between Kemalist secular policies and the demands of the peripheral masses for whom religion remained at the forefront of self-identification increasingly grew. As Poulton puts it: 'the new Islamists have been aided by the very process of modernisation which the old elite initially thought would sweep them away'<sup>27</sup>. In addition, the highly skewed nature of economic development in Turkey as well as the traditional centralisation, corruption and incoherent policy platforms of the traditional ruling parties increased the appeal of extreme parties including Islamic movements. The MSP in the 1970s and the Refah and Fazilet Parties in the 1990s thus appealed to the Islamic identity of many citizens and to the disaffected sections of the population in the rural areas of the country, in the underdeveloped south-east and in the urban *gecekondular*. They capitalised on the worsening economic disparities in the 1990s triggered by Özal's liberalisation reforms and mounting inflation by standing as the defenders of labourers and small tradesmen threatened by unemployment and high interest rates.

It appears that for the moment the application of restrictive laws and military pressure has succeeded in temporarily crushing the rise of political Islam. At the 1999 elections the reformed Fazilet Partisi declined to 15.4% of the vote. However, suppression and force does

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<sup>26</sup> See Danielson, M.N. & Keles, R. (1985), *The Politics of Rapid Urbanisation*, Karpas, K.H. (1964) in Rustow, D.A. and Ward, R.E. (eds.), *Political Modernisation in Japan and Turkey*, Pevsner, L.W. (1984) *Turkey's Political Crisis* and Sunar, I. (1974), *State and Society in the Politics of Turkey's Development*.

<sup>27</sup> Poulton, H (1997) *Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent* pp.205.



not tackle the roots of the issue. Moreover, the problem today can no longer be addressed through sound economic policies or reform of the party system. While increased employment, assured social security, improved infrastructure and health and education services are of fundamental importance, Islamic identity is an undeniable reality in Turkey which will necessarily have to be channelled through a liberal democratic process in order for it not to challenge the integrity and stability of the state.

Second, modernisation and politicisation have been crucial determinants of the awakening of a separate Kurdish identity and the separatist Kurdish challenge. The politicisation of the Kurdish public and the poor socio-economic conditions of the south-east have been a fundamental factor behind Kurdish political mobilisation and rejection of the state system. The Kurdish population mainly inhabiting the rural and undeveloped south-east has suffered from high unemployment rates, the lack of adequate human and physical capital and the general neglect of the agricultural local economy.<sup>28</sup> Their conditions worsened further in the 1980s and 1990s with the majority of state funds for the region being devoted to fighting the PKK. Economic conditions may also explain why other Muslim minorities in Turkey such as the Laz or the Hem°ilis population inhabiting the more prosperous Black Sea areas have not articulated politically in a confrontational manner their separate identity.

Deeply aware of the economic conditions of the south-east, in recent years political elite in Ankara have argued that economic instruments should be employed to resolve the Kurdish problem. By December 2000 civilian governments encouraged by the military had proposed a total of seventeen development packages for the south-east.<sup>29</sup> These are no doubt required. Yet hoping to address the issue today solely through economic development is probably an illusion and a means of postponing necessary political reforms. While uneven economic development may have been a primary cause behind the formation of a separate Kurdish identity, that identity today exists for many Kurdish citizens and will not simply disappear through increased economic well being. Political reform aimed at channelling Kurdish demands through democratic processes is inescapable. In this respect, the liberalisation of the activities of moderate pro-Kurdish political parties, the full implementation of article 39 of the Lausanne Treaty mentioned above, as well as the allowance of Kurdish broadcasting and education are absolute priorities.

<sup>28</sup> Mango, A. (1993) in *Middle Eastern Studies* 29.4 pp.726-757.

<sup>29</sup> However due to financial and political constraints none of the programmes was ever implemented. See Jenkins, G. (2001) *Context and Circumstance: The Turkish Military and Politics*, pp.69.

### 3.3 EU policies towards Turkey

Above the argument has been made that Turkey's EU membership would entail an effective revolution in the traditional Kemalist political system. However, the unavoidability of political reform in the modernising country suggests that the EU anchor could serve as an incentive to carry through necessary political developments in Turkey. In order for this to be the case it is fundamental that the Union adopts a frank and constructive attitude towards this candidate, provided it is serious about its membership prospects.

In the Commission Progress Reports since 1998 and the 2000 Accession Partnership Document, the EU made specific recommendations for political reform in Turkey. With respect to internal political problems in Turkey, the Commission demands that in the short term the proper functioning of state security courts should be ensured while in the medium term the MGK should be transformed into a de facto advisory body. On the question of torture and ill treatment, the Commission mentions the need to comply with the standards set by the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and the ECHR and calls for intensified efforts to strengthen human rights education for police officers. On capital punishment, the Commission calls for the continuation of its effective moratorium in the short run and its abolition in the medium term. Turning to freedom of association and expression, the Commission suggests that in the short term, Turkey should provide the legal guarantees to ensure the respect of these freedoms in line with article 10 of the ECHR. On minority rights, the Commission calls Turkey to legalise Kurdish broadcasting in the short-term and lift all states of emergency in the south-east in the medium-term.

All of the above recommendations are on a whole both desirable and realistic. However, so far EU pressure has failed to induce all-encompassing political reform in Turkey. In order for European recommendations and thus policies of political conditionality to be effective, the incentive of membership must be credible. Credibility requires trust between donor and recipient, clarity of donor objectives, and a sense of immediacy about the promised reward.<sup>30</sup> Arguably all three conditions are not met in the case of Turkey-EU relations.

First, the apparent lack of understanding and blanket criticism in many European capitals of the Turkish political system have led to a deterioration of trust between Turkey and the EU and scepticism in Turkey regarding EU intentions. European political circles have frequently

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<sup>30</sup> See Hopmann,T; (1996) *The Negotiation Process and the Resolution of International Conflicts* (University of South Carolina Press, Columbia).

displayed an over-sympathetic attitude towards extreme religious and separatist movements in Turkey while being overly critical of the state's confrontation of these problems. Such positions have illustrated Europe's profound lack of understanding of Turkish problems, they have triggered a defensive and obstinate Turkish counter-reaction and have thus reduced trust between the two parties. Political elite in Turkey have tended to view EU attitudes as expressions of racism and exclusionism, thus casting doubt upon the credibility of EU's policies of conditionality.

Second, the EU's ambivalent attitudes towards Turkey's candidacy have highlighted its lack of clarity regarding the future role of Turkey in the Union. Contrasting voices within Europe on the questions of Turkey's EU membership ranging from the German Christian Democrat stance to the more favourable British or Italian positions continuously send mixed signals to Turkey. These are reinforced by the apparently incoherent EU positions on this question. The 1997 Luxembourg summit denied Turkey its long desired candidate status, which was finally granted at the 1999 Helsinki summit. However since then the wave of optimism within Europe regarding Turkey's membership has faded. In addition relations between the two have deteriorated with the ongoing crisis regarding Turkey's role in the nascent ESDP, with inclusion of the Cyprus issue in the Accession Partnership Document, with the recognition of the 'Armenian genocide' in the European Parliament and in France and finally with the neglect of Turkey at the December EU Nice Summit. As a consequence Turkey has been recently accusing the EU of applying double standards to Turkey reducing its incentives to comply to EU political recommendations.

Third is the issue of timing. Membership can indeed be a powerful incentive to induce radical political reform in Turkey. However, the changes that Turkey would have to undergo in order to be ready for EU membership as well as the adjustments the EU itself would have to make in order to accommodate Turkey in its structures imply a relatively long time horizon for Turkey's EU membership. Timing affects the value of a promised benefit, and value is critical to ensure that a promised benefit acts as an incentive for reform. Hence, membership alone, while remaining a long-term prospect of utmost importance both for Turkey and the EU, is insufficient to promote necessary political reform in Turkey. If Europe is indeed serious about opening its doors to Turkey and promoting democratic reform in the country, more needs to be done than simply offering a distant and uncertain prospect of membership and imposing a long list of wide-ranging political conditions to be fulfilled by the candidate in the short and medium terms.

This is not to say that EU conditions should not be imposed on Turkey, that conditions can be subject to negotiations, or that the accession process should be replaced by a faster track to full membership open uniquely to Turkey. Such a policy would indeed imply EU double standards and would simply serve to discourage internal reform in Turkey. On the contrary, action should be taken to make the existing accession process truly credible and to encourage political reform in Turkey in accordance to existing EU conditions.

#### **4. Policy issues**

In addition to the conditional incentive of EU membership, Turkey-EU relations should be strengthened in the short and medium terms through other avenues in order to encourage extensive political reform in Turkey. This would send signals to Turkey regarding the clarity of EU objectives, it would increase Turkey's trust of the Union and it would raise the value of the conditional rewards expected by Turkey given the immediacy of these complementary EU policy actions.

The Luxembourg European Summit proposed that a 'special European strategy' should be offered to Turkey *instead* of EU candidacy. This proposal led to sharp criticism in Turkey. This was primarily because Turkey saw itself de-coupled from the enlargement process and because no concrete proposals were made regarding the possible substance of this 'strategy'. As a result Turkey refused to participate in the 1997 European Conference and proceeded with the integration with the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' (TRNC).<sup>31</sup> Excluding Turkey from the accession process and proposing an empty 'European strategy' in its place confirmed many views in Turkey on European prejudiced attitudes towards Muslim Turkey.

However, the concept of a European strategy could be a useful *complement* to Turkey's EU accession process. Provided the option of membership is kept open and a substantial European strategy can be articulated in the short and medium terms as a complement to long-term EU membership, the latter could significantly strengthen Turkey-EU relations and further democratic reform in Turkey.

It is fundamental to stress the concept of complementarity. A European Strategy for Turkey and Turkey's accession process could be complementary in two distinct ways. First, a European Strategy would speed up the accession process by encouraging political reform in

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<sup>31</sup> Through the January 1997 Joint Declaration. This agreement proposed a gradual economic and financial integration and a partial integration in security, defence and foreign policies between Turkey and the 'TRNC'.

Turkey. A European strategy would serve to increase the perceived commitment of the EU towards Turkey, build trust between the two parties and increase the value of Turkey-EU relations by reducing the time perspective for the receipt of promised benefits. These effects would in turn increase the incentive in Turkey to undergo substantial political reform. Reform in turn would shorten Turkey's path to the EU. As such a European strategy would be complementary to the accession process.

Second, a European strategy could be complementary to the accession process by devising ways in which Turkey could become a virtual EU member in particular policy domains, prior to its full EU membership. By integrating with the EU in several policy spheres through specifically designed formulas, Turkey's full transition towards Europe could be made smoother and quicker.

But what could an adequate and complementary European Strategy consist of? Since the 1997 Luxembourg Summit, the European Commission has developed the idea of a 'European Strategy for Turkey' by proposing a development of the 1995 Turkey-EU customs union. On 4 March 1998 the Commission proposed the extension of the Customs Union to the agricultural and services sectors and the strengthening of co-operation in several fields. The European strategy regulations for Turkey were set at 150 million euro for the period 2000-2002. These measures are no doubt constructive. The greatest share of EU imports from Turkey come from agricultural goods. In 1999 agricultural and textile imports from Turkey added up to 14% of total EU imports, compared to machinery, transport material, chemical products and fuels which together added up to 3.6% of total EU imports.<sup>32</sup> Financial transfers are also necessary given they had been blocked for the past five years by the Greek veto in the Council of Ministers.

Deepening integration in trade matters in this way would be particularly important given the widespread scepticism in Turkey regarding the customs union. In a recent article on Turkish Daily News, T. Duggan argued that given the Union's relative gain from the customs union with Turkey, it would be against the latter's economic interests to upgrade Turkey to full membership. With Turkey's full EU membership, the Union would lose many of its trade advantages. Hence, Duggan's conclusion: 'it seems much more profitable for the EU to keep things exactly as they are with client, Turkey, still knocking on the EU door for membership,

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<sup>32</sup> European Commission DG Trade <http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/bilateral/tur.htm>.

while the EU laps up the cream through trade imbalance'.<sup>33</sup> The correctness of this argument is highly debatable, but it nonetheless clearly highlights the frequent scepticism and suspicion of the EU in Turkey. Extending and modifying the customs union on terms more favourable to Turkey would thus not only bring economic gains to the latter but would also improve trust and understanding between the two partners. This in turn would contribute to a reduction of the EU's credibility problem in its policies towards Turkey.

However an extension of the customs union is insufficient. A substantial 'European strategy' for Turkey, which would complement the accession process and provide strong incentives for Turkey's democratic reform would require additional elements. Below some suggestions are made regarding the possible further chapters of a 'European strategy' for Turkey.

#### **4.1 Monetary Policy<sup>34</sup>**

Before the final crisis Turkey had been implementing its latest IMF stand-by agreement for just over one year, with the stated aim to reduce inflation to single digit levels over the next two years. Until the crises of late 2000- early 2001, the implementation of this programme had been the most successful of recent decades (Turkey has had numerous IMF programmes, which had all gone astray). Inflation was reduced from an average of around 100% during the late 1990s, to about 70% in 1999 and 40% in 2000 and was forecasted to reduce further to 20% in 2001. However, following the 18 February financial crisis inflation forecasts for 2001 and 2002 were scaled up to 46.1% and 20% respectively.

Despite the merits of the IMF programme, the latter had serious shortcomings. In particular, the quasi currency board adopted proved a failure. Turkey had chosen a quasi-currency board regime whereby the lira exchange rate was determined with respect to a basket that contained one dollar and 0.7 euro. The authorities then published a path for the value of the TRL in terms of this basket for the entire length of the programme (over one year at the start). The pre-programmed rate of depreciation was set at first only, in order to offset the planned rate of inflation.

The system suffered from the classic problems of a stabilisation programme based on a fixed exchange rate. The exchange rate fixing was perceived as credible, at least in the short run by financial markets. After the initiation of the IMF programme banks began borrowing dollars

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<sup>33</sup> Duggan, T.M.P. 'Turkey's Long March to the EU' Turkish Daily News (19/02/2001).

<sup>34</sup> This section was written with the advice of Daniel Gros, Director, CEPS.

at low rates and investing them extensively in high yielding Turkish T-bills on a large scale. The banking system's net foreign assets thus spiralled downwards, off balance sheet forward transactions left the banks in an open position. As long as the exchange rate held this was extremely profitable. But the exposure of banks made them vulnerable to changing financial market conditions. The inflation programme became also more vulnerable because trade unions took advantage of the initial honeymoon period of high credibility to demand higher wages. This burdened the public sector budget and led to higher than programmed inflation.

The first, three week long financial crisis beginning on 17 November 2000, emerged when the exposure of large-scale corruption in the banking system led to a fall in confidence, i.e. a rise in interest rates. Many banks thus made large losses on their holdings of longer dated T-bills. The central bank attempted to rescue the banking system at the expense of the quasi currency board arrangement causing many small and medium-sized banks to be squeezed both from the interest and exchange rate sides. The situation slightly improved following the announcement of an IMF support package providing an additional \$7.5bn credit.

But recovery did not last. A second crisis was sparked in 17 February 2001, following an argument between President Sezer and Prime Minister Ecevit during the regular monthly meeting of the National Security Council. This second financial crisis triggering the worst economic crisis in the history of the Republic is strictly linked to the corrupt Turkish political system. The IMF rescue package allowed the termination of the November 2000 crisis without encouraging the political class to tackle the fundamental roots of the problem, i.e., corruption. The persisting illegal practices of the collapsed private banks created additional dangerous exposure for the government controlled banks, and cast greater doubt upon the latter's management and lending standards. The scene was set for the second crisis. It should in fact be noted that the issue of corruption rested at the core of the argument during the NSC meeting. Former Judge and current President Sezer as well as military circles had identified corruption as a major security threat in the country. The Operation White Energy launched by the Turkish General Staff in January 2001, and aiming to eradicate corrupt practices in the energy sector quickly identified names of high ranking exponents in governing parties. Unsurprisingly the government chose not to actively pursue the matter. The argument erupted during the MGK meeting when Sezer confronted the Ecevit directly with this evidence.

The crisis that followed constitutes a classical textbook example of the self-reinforcing mechanisms that can operate in financial markets. The Turkish programme was not obviously

doomed as long as confidence was high (and thus interest rates low). However, at low confidence, and thus high interest rates, the situation became suddenly untenable. Interest rates shot up to over 100% and the currency devalued at one point by almost 100 % as well. The sky-high interest rates, even if they did not persist had two effects: a collapse in domestic demand and the explosion of the fiscal deficit. The latter forced the government to raise taxes as the economy contracted. This is the opposite of what it would normally do. But given that investor confidence had to be maintained at all costs in such a situation, the government had no alternative. The combined effect of the crisis plus the large scale corruption in the banking system is that now the debt to GDP ratio stands at close to 100%. Turkey is thus even more vulnerable to speculative attacks.

In May-June 2001, the Turkish government of Turkey agreed upon a wide-ranging reform programme. Not surprisingly the structural part of Minister Dervi's programme focuses heavily upon the reduction of government role in the sectors such as sugar, tobacco, natural gas, civil aviation and telecoms. The programme also includes a proposed Central Bank Law that would also enable independent monetary policy-making. The underlying cause of the problem i.e., political interference in the economy and corruption has been identified. The question remains whether sufficient political commitment exists to deliver the required measures. Vested interests in the standing system in addition to the public pressure to reduce the pain of adjustment shed doubt upon its implementability.

As argued by Professor Steve Hanke<sup>35</sup> these financial crisis would not have occurred with a full currency board. A currency board would have prevented the government from acting as lender of last resort and would have forced banks to reform. As put by Marcel Cassard from Deutsche Bank 'the liquidity crisis is a crisis of confidence' rather than of fundamentals strengthening the case for a credible currency board further'.<sup>36</sup>

In a previous CEPS paper<sup>37</sup> it was argued that an alternative to the quasi current currency board, compatible with Hanke's position would be that to 'euroise' the Turkish economy. This could be achieved through the immediate introduction of a full currency board under which the Central Bank would be ready to exchange any amounts of lira against euro at a fixed rate. This rate would not be changed until 2002, at which date all lira would be

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<sup>35</sup> Financial Times, letters to the editor, 19/12/2000.

<sup>36</sup> Deutsche Bank Emerging Markets Weekly 01/12/2000 pp. 20.

<sup>37</sup> Tocci, N. (1999) 'Turkey and the European Union: Reversing Vicious Circles in Turkey's Political Economy' *CEPS Working Document 134*.



exchanged against the euro notes and coins. It is interesting to note that at present exchange rates the currency board could easily be fixed at 1 million TRL to 1 euro so that one could have a conveniently round convergence rate.

Clearly, full 'euroisation' would imply the loss of the exchange rate instrument and the total loss of control over monetary policy until EU membership is attained. However, important arguments suggest the overall desirability of 'euroisation' in the Turkish economy. Within a context of potential political instability and corruption as in Turkey, long-lasting successful internal reform is an extremely difficult task. An IMF assisted programme, which relies exclusively on internal policy reform, is unlikely to succeed entirely within an unstable and corrupt political context. The recent financial crises in Turkey despite a relatively sound conduct of macroeconomic policy vividly illustrate this argument. The adoption of a foreign currency would transform the Turkish political economy making it impossible to support loss-making public or private enterprises. By renouncing control over monetary policy the government could engage seriously in a wide-ranging reform of the banking system.

Moreover, countries with weak fiscal and monetary regimes such as Turkey are the ones, which stand to gain the most from 'euroisation'.<sup>38</sup> The literature on speculative attacks emphasises that when highly indebted countries such as Turkey lose credibility in the eyes of investors, they have to pay a risk premium in terms of higher interest rates. The higher debt service this entails makes it more likely that the government will attempt to reduce the real value of the debt through surprise inflation. This expectation increases the risk premium further triggering a vicious circle of rising interest rates until the government caves in. How can a virtuous circle be set in motion leading to a more desirable equilibrium? The virtuous circle of credibility, low interest rates and low debt service will begin if financial markets believe a priori that government will be tough on inflation. By adopting the euro and thus renouncing control over monetary policy this would indeed be the case.

Introducing Turkey into the eurozone would complement Turkey's EU accession process in two ways. Through the adoption of the euro and the shift to a higher equilibrium, the Turkish government could redirect expenditure towards more constructive ends. Lower expenditure on debt servicing would entail considerable budgetary gains. Resources would be thus freed for the Turkish government to redirect towards the real economy and in particular towards the

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<sup>38</sup> Gros, D. (10/1999), 'Who Needs and External Anchor' preliminary and incomplete, and Gros, D. and Steinherr, A. (2001), *Economic Transition in Central and Eastern Europe*, forthcoming.

economic development of the south-east. As noted above all of the economic development plans proposed by governments in recent years were in part hampered by budgetary restraints. The economic rehabilitation of the south-east together with accompanying political reforms with regards to the Kurdish population would move Turkey towards a satisfaction of the EU's Copenhagen political criteria. This would in turn boost Turkey's accession process.

Second, Turkey's inclusion into the eurozone prior to membership would boost its accession process by allowing Turkey's virtual EU membership in the monetary as well as in the trade policy sphere. This would confirm to Turkey the Union's commitment towards its future accession and encourage Turkey's full transition towards Europe.

It should be noted that at a conference in Florence in June 2001, Economy Minister Kemal Dervi° suggested a unilateral adoption of the euro prior to Turkey's full EU membership<sup>39</sup>. Dervi° mentioned the idea of euroisation in five years time once low inflation is achieved. The argument above suggests this could occur much sooner.

## **4.2 European Security and Defence Policy<sup>40</sup>**

Devising a formula for the accommodation of Turkey in European Security and Defence Policy structures could represent the second fundamental pillar of a European strategy for Turkey. Turkey's role in the nascent ESDP has been a matter of ardent dispute between Turkey and the EU for several months. Turkey pledged 4-5,000 troops to the Rapid Reaction Force and as a former WEU associate member is determined to participate in ESDP decision-making procedures<sup>41</sup>. Having been denied participation; Turkey vetoed the EU's assured access to NATO assets for crisis management. An understanding may have been reached at the NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Budapest on 29-30 May 2001. This could lead Turkey to drop its veto within NATO.

What are Turkey's demands? Turkey demands the same role in European security and defence decision-making as it enjoyed within the WEU. In 1992 Turkey, together with Iceland and Norway (i.e., the other non-EU European NATO countries), became an associate member of the WEU. This allowed it to:

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<sup>39</sup> See 'Turkey may adopt the euro before joining the EU, says Dervi°' *Financial Times* 04/06/01.

<sup>40</sup> This section was written with Marc Houben, Research Fellow, CEPS.

<sup>41</sup> See article by Ismail Cem, *Financial Times*, Personal View, May 29 2001.

(...) take part on the same basis as full members in WEU military operations to which they commit forces (...). The right to speak brings with it the possibility to present proposals. Full participation will include participation in caucuses subject to the same rules as for participation in the meetings of the WEU Council and other bodies.<sup>42</sup>

In practice this entailed a well-integrated role of associate and observer members into the WEU structure concerning non-Article 5 activities, although only the 10 member states had full decision-making rights in WEU. In addition, associate members were also involved in side-institutions or activities of the WEU such as the Parliamentary Assembly, the Institute for Security Studies or the Satellite Centre. This prevented the creation and perception of insiders and outsiders in the overall institutional set-up of the organisation.

At the NATO Washington Summit of 1999 the Heads of State and Governments stated that:

We acknowledge the resolve of the European Union to have the capacity for autonomous action so that it can take decisions and approve military action where the Alliance as a whole is not engaged (...). NATO and the EU should ensure the development of effective mutual consultation, co-operation and transparency, building on the mechanisms existing between NATO and the WEU (...) We attach the utmost importance to ensuring the fullest possible involvement of non-EU European allies in EU-led crisis response operations, building on existing consultation arrangements within the WEU (...). (...) the concept of using separable but not separate NATO assets and capabilities for WEU-led operations should be further developed.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, in the Strategic Alliance the Heads of State agree that:

(...) on a case-by-case basis and by consensus, to make its assets and capabilities available for operations in which the Alliance is not engaged militarily under the political control and strategic direction either of the WEU or as otherwise agreed, taking into account the full participation of all European Allies if they were so to choose.<sup>44</sup>

Well after the Washington summit, the EU refused to offer the same role to the former WEU associate members. Turkey was offered full participation in *decision-shaping* process and *operational planning*, i.e. the day-to-day management of an EU-led operation. Turkey, as a

<sup>42</sup> WEU Council of Ministers, Minutes agreed in connection with the document on associate membership, Rome, 20 November 1992.

<sup>43</sup> Washington Summit Communiqué, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C., 24 April 1999.

<sup>44</sup> The Alliance's Strategic Concept, approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C. on 23-24 April 1999.

non-EU member, was not offered participation in *decision-making*. In particular the EU rejected Turkey's:

- participation on the same basis as full members in EU military operations to which they commit forces;
- right to speak and with it the possibility to present proposals;
- full participation in caucuses subject to the same rules as for participation in the meetings of the General Affairs Council and other bodies, i.e. Political and Security Committee.

The discrepancy is clear. Turkey had a certain position within the WEU, allowing it to broker power. Turkey was promised at the NATO Summit in Washington in 1999 that the EU should build on existing mechanisms of the WEU. In the process of building a credible Rapid Reaction Capability, the EU stated its right to an "autonomous decision capacity" and is thus not willing to go as far as the WEU did in engaging its associated members. Turkey has pledged 4-5,000 troops to the Rapid Reaction Force and thus demands inclusion in ESDP decision-making procedures in the way it was included in the WEU.

The failure of the EU to build upon the existing consultation arrangements within the WEU provides the general legal context for Turkey's demands. However, Turkey's insistence upon this issue can be explained by more substantial reasons. First, Turkey's accession to the EU is still a long-term prospect. NATO countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic whose accession to the Union will occur over the next three to four years are in a relatively unproblematic position. They will effectively begin participating in the Union's ESDP in its early days. However, countries like Turkey or Norway whose EU accession lies either in the distant future or is not foreseen for the time being are left in a more complex situation. Hence, both Turkey and Norway as former WEU Associate states would prefer to be included in ESDP *decision making* as well as *decision shaping*.

Second, Turkey, unlike Norway, lies in a volatile and unstable geographical position. Although the future ESDP is likely to take a global view of security issues, its major theatres of operation are likely to be in problem areas in and around Europe. NATO's work on potential scenarios point to sixteen potential areas for the deployment of the RRF. Thirteen of these hotspots lie around Turkey and thus critically affect its security. In particular Turkey fears a European defence involvement in Cyprus. Cyprus has historically been one of the top foreign policy priorities in Turkey. Furthermore, over the decades and in particular since the

1990 application of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU, Turkey and the Union have taken increasingly diverging positions on the conflict. Given opposing political positions on this question, Turkey is adamant not to transfer these political divergences to the security domain, which could occur with the creation of an ESDP from which Turkey is excluded.

Third, the incomplete transfer of the WEU institutional set-up to the EU also entails an effective downgrading of Turkey's status in European security affairs. Under the ESDP, Turkey would not be able to participate automatically in European military exercises and in the whole array of side-institutions such as the Institute for Security Studies and the Satellite Centre. Moreover, it would have to withdraw from several European security activities such as MAPE policing in Albania, to which Turkey is an active contributor. Withdrawal from such security initiatives in the Balkans, an area of considerable security interest to Turkey would be clearly unacceptable to the latter.

Given the general legal context and Turkey's pressing security concerns outlined above, a formula for Turkey's accommodation within ESDP should be found. Such a formula could represent another ideal element of a European Strategy. Turkey's accommodation within ESDP is also crucial because it would prevent an additional psychological feeling of exclusion in Turkey. Given the different mechanisms of inclusion under the WEU institutional framework, failing to accommodate Turkish concerns in ESDP would enhance the feeling of rejection. In Turkey's eyes the current EU position illustrates the Union's general lack of credible commitment towards this candidate country. If the EU is indeed serious about its accession process towards Turkey why does it reject the WEU institutional structure? Arguably, accommodation within ESDP is vital to the Union's credibility in the eyes of this candidate member. Enhancing credibility through accommodation in ESDP would in turn both strengthen the perceived commitment of the EU towards Turkey, and by encouraging political change in Turkey, it would speed up Turkey's full EU accession.

Which formula could both be acceptable to European legal principles and address Turkish concerns? An understanding may have been reached at the NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Budapest on 29-30 May 2001. Discussions were based on Turkish, British and US proposals to accommodate Turkey in ESDP. Discussions concerned first, Turkish participation in EU military exercises. Second, greater frequency of EU consultations with the 6 non-EU European Allies. Third, the presence of Turkish military officers in the EU Military Staff. Finally, a consideration of Turkish national security interests. A distinction would be

made between strategic and non-strategic NATO assets made available to the EU and between the geographical locations where those assets would be deployed. The EU would have assured access to non-strategic assets. But in the case of strategic assets such as fuel pipelines, intelligence and command and control structures, necessary for hard security operations, the EU would need NATO approval on a case by case basis. NATO member Turkey would thus be given a de facto veto right over these operations. Areas in Turkey's national interests such as the Aegean, Cyprus and possibly Nagorno Karabakh effectively would be excluded from EU-led operations.

If progress was made along these lines, this would indeed be a momentous step forward. A complementary proposal could be that of including some or all of these elements in a 'Security Agreement' between Turkey and the EU. The Schengen Agreement was an intergovernmental agreement concluded outside the EU framework. In the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, the agreement was included in the EU *acquis*. Its purpose is to remove all controls at internal land, sea and airport frontiers. On 26 March 2001, the five Nordic countries (Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway and Iceland) entered the Schengen Agreement and thus officially entered part of the EU. This enables these countries to maintain the Nordic Passport Union, which allows their citizens to move freely across their borders. However, Norway and Iceland remain non-EU members. They are not allowed a veto within the Council of Ministers and if a decision were taken by the Council that was then rejected by their national parliaments, the agreement would collapse.

This model of an inter-governmental agreement either outside or within the EU Treaties could be translated to the security sphere. One could foresee a European intergovernmental agreement on external security. Two variants are possible: 1) EU member states engage in such an intergovernmental agreement with Turkey, or 2) the EU itself agrees upon a bilateral agreement with Turkey. The elements included in such an agreement could be variants of those discussed at the NATO Budapest meeting.

### **4.3 Foreign policy in the Caucasus**

A final component of a Turkish 'European strategy' could foresee foreign policy co-operation in a region like the Caucasus. Below it will be argued that the potential roles of the EU and Turkey in the Caucasus could be strongly complementary. Hence, foreign policy co-operation in this region could represent a final and effective element of a European Strategy for Turkey.

The EU is becoming increasingly preoccupied with its policies vis-à-vis its periphery, lying on and beyond the enlargement territories. The future borderlands of the EU, more often than not afflicted by chronic instability and poverty, will require a consistent and comprehensive set of EU policies aimed at exporting the latter's stability and prosperity to its neighbours. But the EU is not ready for a substantial and prominent role in the South Caucasus. At the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit all of the leaders of the South Caucasus as well as former President Demirel called for a Stability Pact for the Caucasus, which would involve the three south Caucasus states, the three neighbours (Russia, Turkey and Iran) and the other two main players (EU and US). The EU, while acknowledging the appeal of such an initiative has been cautious in its response, in the light of its extensive commitments in the Balkans. Europe's attitude vis-à-vis the Caucasus has been one of 'benign indifference'.<sup>45</sup> The Union has kept a low political profile in the Caucasus, and its policies have been applied indiscriminately to the Caucasus and to Central Asia. Furthermore, EU budgets for the Caucasus are consistently being cut. With the EU Troika Mission to the South Caucasus in February 2001, Union interest in the region has risen. Nonetheless, at this stage it is still unclear whether this will mark a short-term visible increase in EU attention to the South Caucasus.

Turkey instead is already present in the South Caucasus and could play a fundamental role in its political and economic development. Yet it cannot do so as an independent actor. Turkey directly borders all three South Caucasian countries and has strong linkages both to its ethnic brothers in Azerbaijan and Central Asia and with other Caucasian peoples including the Adjarians in Georgia and the Karachai, Kabardins and Balkars in the North Caucasus. Particularly since the collapse of the Soviet Union Turkey has taken an active interest in the area. Turkish schools have emerged in Azerbaijan and Central Asia and Turkish entrepreneurs have invested in Karachai-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria contributing to the economic development of these impoverished Russian Republics. Turkey has also acted as a model for Caucasian Islamic countries, as a westernising and secular Muslim country. Finally, Turkey plays a central role in the development of Caspian oil and gas, with the most notable example being the planned Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the adjacent gas pipeline which has emerged as a realistic prospect with the recent Azeri gas finds. However, Turkey's positive potential in

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<sup>45</sup> Coppieters, B. (1998), 'Georgia in Europe: the idea of Periphery in International Relations' in Coppieters, B., Trenin, D. and Zverev, A. (eds.) *Commonwealth and Independence in Post-Soviet Eurasia* pp.44-68.

the region is hindered by its partial position in the region and in particular its economic blockade on and lack of diplomatic relations with Armenia.

Hence, Turkey's potential economic and political roles in the Caucasus and the EU's half-hearted recognition of the region's importance but partial inability and unwillingness to take a more active and direct lead could neatly dovetail each other. The Union's political involvement in the region could have considerable impact without a substantial increase in economic assistance through its co-operation with Turkey. This naturally requires an immediate normalisation of Turkish-Armenian relations. The Turkish blockade of Armenia has arguably damaged Turkish interests. It has radicalised the attitudes of Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora, who have successfully lobbied for a renewed discussion on the 1915 Armenian 'genocide' in the US, France, Italy and European Parliament. Furthermore, the blockade has harmed Turkish reputation abroad while not effectively stopping Turkish Armenian-trade, where many Turkish goods are successfully sold in Armenia after being smuggled through Georgia or Iran. Turkish businessmen have frequently signalled their eagerness to officials to legally trade with their Armenian neighbours.

Even with a normalisation of Turkish-Armenian relations, the potential of Turkey's constructive role in the Caucasus is hampered by the country's non-neutral position on the Karabakh conflict. However, its collaboration with the EU in this area of foreign policy would increase Turkey's credibility in its propositions for a multilateral co-operative initiative in the region. The complementarity in EU and Turkey's foreign policies in this region is self-evident and should be exploited to the full through the actualisation of a Stability Pact for the Caucasus involving both the EU and Turkey as well as other external actors.<sup>46</sup> The prospect of such an initiative would greatly increase if an agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh is found soon.

Within the framework of such a multilateral co-operative initiative Turkey and the EU could devise strategies for mutually reinforcing roles. Such co-operation would not only strengthen relations between Turkey and the Union. It would also accustom Turkey to the norms, standards and practices of EU foreign policy making. Finally, it would encourage a normalisation of Turkey's relations with Armenia, an implicit requirement of the EU towards

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<sup>46</sup> For a discussion of what a Stability Pact could consist of see Celac, S, Emerson, M and Tocci, N 'A Stability Pact for the Caucasus' CEPS 2000.



its applicants as set out in its Agenda 2000.<sup>47</sup> Co-operation in this field would thus complement Turkey's accession process by anchoring Turkey more strongly to Europe and encouraging political changes in Turkey in the foreign policy sphere which would in turn accelerate its accession to the EU.

## **5. Conclusions**

In this paper an analysis of the Turkish political context attempted to explain the some of the critical political issues in Turkey repeatedly mentioned by European officials. An awareness of this context appears to be of fundamental importance for two principal reasons. First, it highlights the extent of change Turkey would have to undertake in order to comply with EU norms and enter the EU. Second, it suggests that in order for the EU to formulate adequate and realistic policies towards Turkey an awareness of the country's overall political context is an absolute prerequisite.

So far EU policies have by and large made realistic and desirable recommendations to Turkish decision-makers. Yet its policies of conditionality have suffered from a profound lack of credibility. Hence, this paper's suggestions on how the current policy of EU accession could be complemented by an additional 'European strategy' for Turkey. Closer cooperation and inclusion in areas such as trade, monetary, security and foreign policies could serve both as a formula to enhance relations between the two partners and accelerate Turkish democratic reform in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>47</sup> Agenda 2000 stated that as conditions to be fulfilled prior to membership applicant countries would have to resolve any pending territorial disputes with other EU members or neighbouring non-members either through negotiation or through arbitration by the International Court of Justice.

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Centre for European Policy Studies  
1 Place du Congrès  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: 32(0)2.229.39.11 Fax: 32(0)2.219.41.51  
E-mail: [info@ceps.be](mailto:info@ceps.be) Website: <http://www.ceps.be>