

Turkey¹

Turkey is commonly exhibited as an inspiring example of how a powerful external incentive, such as the prospect of membership to the European Union (EU), can play a major role in propelling democratic change. Few would doubt that the EU has played a significant causal role in Turkey's process of incremental democratization. In particular, since Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) won power in 2002, Turkey has inched towards democratic consolidation. The acceleration and deepening of democratic reform occurred as the EU took a number of steps that opened up and then rendered apparently more imminent the prospect of Turkey joining the "European club." Relative to the other cases studied in this volume, Turkey is a case in which a qualitatively different democracy promotion tool has been available: the carrot of admission to the EU club of democracies, far more meaningful for and intrusive of domestic politics than any other regional organization. On balance, this is a case where the international community has firmly upheld its commitment, expressed for example in the inaugural Warsaw Declaration of the Community of Democracies, to support democratic governance.

While the EU-Turkey relationship has been widely analyzed, such assessments have adhered overwhelmingly to a single-track argument: namely, that Turkey's reform process cannot be separated from the evolution of EU policy, and that the achievement of EU membership remains crucial to the continuing momentum of Turkey's democratic "deepening." While largely in agreement with this standard assertion, this chapter offers some variance to the assessment. Approaching the subject primarily from a democracy promotion perspective rather than as a more general EU foreign policy project leads to some notable conclusions: democracy promotion per se has not in an obvious sense been the primary goal of European efforts; ambivalence has pervaded the United States' efforts to deepen dem-

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ocratic quality in Turkey; and it remains unclear how far external influences have actually embedded a democracy-deepening dynamic in Turkey. Turkey is not quite as straightforward a case of democracy promotion success as might appear to be the case, and thus provides a mixed set of insights for the international community of democracies.

Background

The reform process undertaken by Turkish governments during the last decade is of undeniable significance. The extent of change has taken Turkey into the category of an essentially democratic state, albeit one still short of full consolidation. The reach of democratic reform has entailed an important shift in the political culture and institutional structure of the country. Likewise, in the economic sphere, Turkey has made fundamental progress and can be regarded as a functioning market economy, although with the firm need to maintain recent economic stabilization and reform achievements.

During the 1990s, democratization efforts in Turkey suffered from short-lived coalition governments, weak political leadership, a severe financial crisis, a strong influence of the military in politics and a heightened security environment that was aggravated by the struggle against the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), as well as an uneasiness over an Islamic resurgence in Turkish politics. While some reforms were implemented, there were few signs of any profound change of political perspectives within the Kemalist elite. Changes were introduced to address basic human rights issues, but without fundamental reform of military-dominated power structures or to Turkey's state-centric strategic culture.

In 1997, the Turkish military eased out of power the Islamist-oriented government of Necmettin Erbakan; the Constitutional Court then banned the Islamist Refah party. The undramatic and gradualist manner in which the military reasserted its control was widely dubbed Turkey's "post-modern coup." In the wake of this coup, the right-wing, anti-reform MHP (Nationalist Action Party) gained strength, winning a place in a new coalition government. In 1999, a new government led by Bülent Ecevit more openly acknowledged existing democratic shortfalls. The Ecevit government enacted two important constitutional reform packages, changed numerous laws and regulations and revised the Civil Code that dated back to the military government in 1928. Changes brought about by over 30 constitutional amendments included the abolition of the death penalty; the removal of military officers as judges in the State Security Courts; the first steps towards widening broadcasting rights and education

in languages other than Turkish; a slightly reduced role of the military-dominated National Security Council; some improvements regarding freedom of thought and expression; an expansion of the rights of religious minorities; and a lifting of emergency statutes in parts of the southeast region of the country.

Reforms were carried out at a faster pace and attained broader coverage when the moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in late 2002. Until then, Turkish political life had been dominated by mostly unstable coalition governments, sometimes holding power for as little as three months. In the November 3, 2002 general elections, the AKP won a landslide victory and acquired an absolute parliamentary majority, receiving more than one-third of all votes cast and 363 of 550 parliamentary seats. A change in the constitution resulted in the election of Recep Tayyip Erdogan – previously banned from politics – to parliament, a prerequisite for his becoming prime minister on March 14, 2003. Its absolute majority in parliament allowed the AKP quickly to pass through parliament laws, regulations and a series of political reform packages.

After 2001, nine major reform packages introduced vital changes to the constitution and a swathe of laws and regulations. In May 2003, a Reform Monitoring Group was established involving officials and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which introduced a system of sanctions for those in the bureaucracy, security services and judiciary who continued to block reforms.² It was widely argued that reform had been sufficient to change Turkey's underlying political culture and challenge many issues that had until recently been taboo.³

Important legal changes adopted by the Erdogan government, in June 2003, provided for international observers at elections; authorized media broadcasts in Kurdish; lightened restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly; scrapped the heavily criticized anti-terror law; and repealed an article that allowed leniency for honor killings. Most significantly, the AKP government pushed through measures to reduce the political role of the military: many of the National Security Council's (NSC) executive functions were downgraded to merely advisory input; the number of civilian seats on the NSC was increased to nine, against the five held by military officers;

² *Financial Times*, May 8, 2003.

³ B. Gurkan, "Turkey's push for reform: moving beyond rhetoric," *Turkey in Focus*, June 2004.

parliamentary scrutiny over the military budget was strengthened, and was used in 2004 to reduce defense expenditure; and military representation in a number of civilian bodies was reduced. An eighth reform package, in 2004, also enhanced the independence of key media outlets.

Despite Turkey's remarkable progress in adapting legislation to European standards, deficiencies in the implementation of legislation have been and continue to be a major challenge. Moreover, substantial legal shortcomings remain, especially in relation to safeguarding fundamental freedoms and human rights, particularly freedom of expression, women's rights, religious freedoms, trade union rights, cultural rights and the further strengthening of protection against torture and ill-treatment.⁴

Nevertheless, even after eight successive harmonization packages, the Turkish military retained significant powers and influence. The armed forces continued to enjoy a formal, constitutionally mandated role to protect the secularism of the state. The Supreme Military Council remained exempt from judicial review, with the army resisting more strongly the prospect of subordination to civilian courts because of the AKP's hold on power. The civilian defense ministry still did not exercise the same primacy over security policy as in fully democratic states, with meetings of the NSC attracting intense media coverage and debate as crucial determinants of policy. In addition, a large proportion of economic contracts still originated with the military.

The eruption of Kurd-related violence, in June 2004, emphasized the limitations of democratic reform. Violent attacks carried out by the PKK-successor, the Kurdistan's People's Congress (or Kongra-Gel) were met with clampdowns by the army. Incidents of such violence increased throughout 2005 and were, it was alleged, met with increasing human rights abuses on the part of security forces. Notwithstanding the influence of a more democracy-oriented new leadership from the armed forces, the latter still sought to limit the pace and reach of reforms. In the middle of 2004, the army helped ensure that government proposals purporting to give graduates of religious schools equal status in access to universities were dropped.⁵ A new penal code adopted in June 2005, strengthening penalties against honor killings and torture, also prescribed prison sen-

4 Commission of the European Communities, "Communication from the Commission: 2005 Enlargement Strategy Paper," November 9, 2005.

5 For details on these limits to military reform, see S. Aydin and E. Fuat Keyman, *European Integration and the Transformation of Turkish Democracy*, CEPS EU-Turkey Working Papers no. 2, 2004, pp. 20-21.

tences for journalists deemed to have insulted the nation or to have harmed national interests. Low level disputes between the AKP and army increased in early 2006, when controversy also erupted over the government's decision to name as new central bank governor an "Islamist banker" opposed to the notion of interest.

In short, reform had been significant and far-reaching, but required extending if Turkey were to consolidate a high quality democratic process. Turkey had transited from post-modern coup to what might be termed a "post-modern democratic transition" piloted by an uneasy mix of the AKP and reformist elements of the Kemalist elite. In little under a decade, and galvanized by the pivotal opportunity afforded by the 2002 elections, a transition had unfolded that was more Mexico-style protracted incrementalism than Ukraine-style rupture. The question remained, however, whether such logic would persist in taking Turkey smoothly towards full democratic consolidation.

The International Response

European influence has been apparent in each step of Turkey's reform process, both in setting the general parameters for the country's increasingly democratic identity and in conditioning very specific constitutional changes, in particular after the pivotal December 1999 decision to grant Turkey the status of candidate for EU entry.

Setting a Democracy Agenda

Over four decades ago, the then European Community signed an association agreement with Ankara in 1963. After the military coup in 1980, European states suspended aid and broke off dialogue. Turkey applied for EC membership again in 1987, but was once again rebuffed. Conversely, Turkey was admitted into the European Court of Human Rights, which gradually made an impact at the level of individual human rights petitions. While European aid was of limited magnitude into the 1990s, Turkey became the third largest recipient of US aid. With EU membership still seeming out of reach at this stage, Ankara's orientation was more towards Washington than to Brussels. The United States was more sympathetic than European governments were towards the Turkish government's hard-line campaign against the PKK.

While democratic rights continued to worsen, the EU negotiated a customs union with Turkey, which entered into force at the end of 1995. Arms sales also increased. For a time, the European Parliament blocked the customs union, but eventually approved it, citing modest changes to

Turkish human rights legislation. Although the EU continued at this stage to reject Turkey's accession aspirations, strategic considerations led Brussels to build closer relations with the military-dominated regime. The area of funding that increased fastest after 1995 was aid for military training, while democracy assistance remained negligible – and projects were often diluted at the behest of Turkish official pressure. These relations sent a mixed message to Turkish reformers.

Crisis erupted at the Luxembourg European Council in 1997 when the European Union granted candidate status to ten eastern European applicants, but not Turkey. The EU insisted that this decision constituted a punitive response to the military's actions against the Erbakan government. Amidst Turkish protestations at being held to harsher standards than eastern European countries, the Luxembourg decision initially appeared to have a counter-productive impact on reform in Turkey. Ankara suspended political dialogue with the EU and further restricted the scope of many governance aid projects. The rise of the right-wing, anti-reform MHP, after 1998, was widely attributed to the EU rejection.

Indeed, European policies soon changed course. Turkey was allocated an increased share of European Commission aid under the so-called MEDA program (the EU's aid budget that covered partner states in the Barcelona Process).⁶ In fact, a number of European governments strengthened their bilateral relations with Turkey after the Luxembourg meeting, including Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. The Quintet was formed, bringing together the largest European states with Turkey, to discuss the strengthening of relations. These various steps seemed directly to confuse the notion of EU policy being concerned with responding critically to the 1997 coup.

Such steps also presaged the decision to reverse – after only two years – the Luxembourg rebuff and accept Turkey as a candidate at the Helsinki European Council meeting of December 1999. This decision was facilitated by what appeared to be the increasingly evident defeat of the PKK; the ejection from government in Germany of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), broadly hostile to Turkish membership; and a softening of Greek positions in the wake of the earthquakes that struck both Greece and Turkey in 1999.

⁶ The Barcelona process being the initiative created in 1995 to manage economic, political and cultural relations between the EU and the states of the southern Mediterranean, including Turkey, Israel, Malta, Cyprus and eight Arab partners.

The US had also moved to strengthen ties, partly in compensation for the Luxembourg decision, and signed a new Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with Turkey. Indeed, Turkey only accepted the Helsinki deal after President Clinton made a personal call to plead with Prime Minister Ecevit, who was initially angered by conditions relating to Cyprus and disputed islands in the Aegean.

Linked to the Helsinki decision, the European Parliament unblocked aid programs, specifically tying the release of funds to Turkey's agreement to accept reinitiated civil society and democracy projects.⁷ A new Accession Partnership document outlined the detailed steps by which EU cooperation would help move Turkey towards fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria. Annual Commission aid allocations to Turkey by now were doubled, to just below 200 million euros.⁸ The European Investment Bank made available an additional 6.4 billion euros in loans. In April 2000, the first EU-Turkey association council in three years was held.

The EU volte-face was widely linked to the stirrings of genuine reform in Turkey at the time – both the effect of incipient internal change and cause of its acceleration. Most directly, the Helsinki decision opened the way to Turkey's introduction of National Adaptation Plans, designed specifically around its new pre-accession agreement with the EU. The dialogue between European and Turkish business representatives, which had been regularized under the customs union agreement, was widely linked to the latter's new and crucial pro-reform advocacy. A key factor was the concomitant role played by Western states through the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In response to Turkey's rapidly deepening financial crisis, particularly Germany and the US pushed to obtain a generous IMF rescue package. While the IMF focus was on economic rather than political reforms, it was the economic crisis that brought down the government and culminated in the AKP's assumption of power.

In Helsinki's Wake: The EU Accession Process Stalls

Few doubted that the new prospect of EU membership stood as a key reference point in the AKP's apparently firm commitment to democratization. But exactly how did the international community respond to the breakthrough reform opportunity offered by the 2002 elections? Notwithstanding the widely celebrated success of EU influence, at and

7 Agence Europe, December 3, 1999, p.10.

8 Agence Europe, April 10-11, 2000, p.12.

beyond this crucial juncture, international interventions to prompt full democratic consolidation were often equivocal.

The EU had accepted Turkey's candidature, but had not committed proactively to facilitating Turkey's adhesion within a specified timeframe. After acrimonious debate, the European Council meeting in Copenhagen, in December 2002, failed to offer Turkey a firm date for the opening of entry negotiations. The UK had pressed for such a date to be offered and within a short time period; however, its attempt to set a date was frustrated by France, Germany and the European Commission. The Turkish government once again railed at European double standards, evidenced by the opening of entry talks with Bulgaria and Romania, both still short of democratic consolidation. While insisting that such "discrimination" was prejudicial to the process of democratic reform, in practice it once again reacted to disappointment by introducing a further raft of reforms.

Turkey was awarded an extra 250 million euros of EU aid for accession preparations, especially on political reform, for 2003-2004. By 2003, Turkey was the second highest recipient (after Serbia and Montenegro) of Commission aid anywhere in the world.⁹ A Pre-Accession Strategy was agreed in May 2003, with more specific conditionality that linked the release of specific parcels of aid to stipulated reforms. Under this strategy, cooperation was to be given "an accession orientation" for the first time. At this juncture, the Commission recognized it made what was its first meaningful move to elaborate a significant program of democracy and governance assistance in Turkey. Aid allocations would increase to 300 million euros for 2005 and then to 500 million euros in 2006, with democracy and institution-building initiatives debuting as identified priorities for aid expenditure.

In practice, most political aid consisted of twinning schemes between European and Turkish ministries and public administration bodies.¹⁰ Funding from the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) was small scale and – diplomats acknowledged – frequently adjusted in response to official authorities' sensitivities. Turkish authorities continued to impose restrictions on members of the European Parliament (MEPs) visiting Kurdish prisoners and activists.¹¹ Moreover, other than

9 Commission of the European Communities, *EU Donor Atlas*, Brussels, European Commission, 2004, p. 27.

10 Commission for the European Communities, *Pre-Accession Strategy for Turkey*, Brussels, European Commission, 2003, www.cec.eu.int.

11 Agence Europe, February 23, 2000, p. 8; and April 15, 2000, p. 5.

Commission aid, only Germany (of national donors) offered a significant aid allocation – of 118 million dollars for 2001. No other European donor offered more than 20 million dollars annually.¹²

Moreover, democracy-related cooperation on the ground was increasingly overshadowed at this stage by perceptions of growing European hostility to Turkish membership. Opposition came from the Austrian government; the German CDU and many voices within the rival Social Democratic party (SPD); members of the Dutch government; and President Chirac's center-right UMP (Union for the Presidential Majority), as well as leaders of the French Socialist party. A number of European Commissioners also began to voice strong concerns, particularly in relation to what was claimed to be a potential 20 billion euro a year cost to the EU taxpayer for Turkish entry. For many such voices, "privileged partnership" was advocated as a maximum EU offer to Turkey. While formally supporting Turkey's candidature himself, Chirac agreed to submit to referendum all future enlargements, after the entry of Romania and Bulgaria. With opinion polls revealing that as much as 90 percent of the French population was hostile to Turkish accession, this was widely interpreted as a de facto block.¹³

Against this internal EU background, further delay in the accession process was greeted with increasing suspicion in Turkey. EU statements and Commission reports routinely asserted "significant further efforts...are still required" of Turkey in the area of democratization. Member states appeared increasingly keen to push a decision on opening accession negotiations into the hands of the bureaucrats at the Commission to shield themselves from domestic concerns, if and when these talks opened, and from Turkish opprobrium, if and when they were further postponed.

US policy increasingly became embroiled in and conditioned by Iraq-related considerations. When the Turkish Parliament rejected a US request to deploy troops on Turkish territory, prominent Bush administration "neo-con" Paul Wolfowitz infamously lambasted the political-military elite for not quashing the legislature. This exercise in parliamentary democracy was especially independent-minded as Turkey was seeking at this point to negotiate a further IMF support package.¹⁴ From a US standpoint, the

12 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee figures, www.oecd.org/stats.

13 *Financial Times*, September 10, 2004.

14 M. Belge, "The Turkish Refusal," *Open Democracy*, May 21, 2005.

Iraq conflict appeared to exacerbate Turkey's reorientation towards Europe and, to some extent, away from the United States. Not only did Turkey stay out of the war against Iraq; its subsequent support for US initiatives in the region, from the Greater Middle East Initiative to counter-proliferation efforts in Iran, at best, was half-hearted.¹⁵

The AKP government did eventually convince the parliament to agree at least to US overflights. The European reaction to this decision served to sow further transatlantic tension. France, Germany and Belgium refused to back Ankara's request for a NATO commitment to defend Turkey in the event of a spill over of conflict in northern Iraq. Rumors abounded that France and other European governments had warned Turkish officials that if Turkey carried through on its offer to deploy troops in post-invasion Iraq, the country's membership prospects would be harmed. By 2004, the prospect of Turkish accession giving the EU a border with Iraq compounded the security risk of proceeding with Turkey's application. A – if not, *the* – major plank of US policy was the indirect approach to deepening Turkish democracy, of pressing the EU to proceed more firmly and rapidly with accession negotiations. At the EU-US summit of June 2004, President Bush declared that Turkey was ready for EU membership, and implicitly criticized European prevarication. This had predictably counter-productive effects amongst most member states.

In October 2004, the European Commission recommended that accession negotiations be opened. The familiar range of concerns was raised in relation to the need for further reforms, but it was argued that Ankara had moved far enough to merit formal entry talks.¹⁶ Debate at this point was dominated by the proposed law to make adultery a justiciable offence; directly in response to EU complaints, the Erdogan government dropped this legislation. At their December 2004 summit, European leaders accepted the Commission's recommendation and agreed that entry negotiations would begin in October 2005. Curiously, the mood accompanying this hugely significant step forward was far from celebratory. The Turkish reaction was soured by a number of qualifying factors to the agreement: the further ten-month delay; a provision for negotiations to be suspended by a qualified majority vote among member states; and EU insistence that there could be permanent safeguards against the free movement of Turkish citi-

15 S. Cagaptay, "Where goes the U.S.-Turkish relationship?" *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2004.

16 Commission of the European Communities, *2004 Regular Report on Turkey's Progress towards Accession*, October 6, 2004, Brussels, COM(2004)656.

zens and against Turkey receiving its full entitlement of cohesion and agricultural funds. The summit saw the UK, Italy and Belgium lining up against France, Austria and Denmark, the latter group pushing most strongly for safeguards and qualifications. Given the additional conditions appended to the deal with Turkey, after December 2004, it was no longer convincing for the EU to argue that it was merely holding Turkey to the same benchmarks as previous applicants.

As 2005 progressed, it was the EU's own internal crisis that exercised a major impact on policy towards Turkey. The rejection of the EU draft constitutional treaty in France and the Netherlands was widely attributed, in part, to popular opposition to Turkish accession. In the summer of 2005, a Eurobarometer poll showed that a clear majority of EU citizens opposed Turkish entry. A poll commissioned by the German Marshall Fund revealed that only 22 percent of Europeans favored Turkey's accession.¹⁷ The impact of terrorist attacks on European soil (in Madrid and London) and in Istanbul, and the growing debates about immigration and integration, were seen by many as factors contributing to the strong public mood against Turkish accession.

As the moment of decision on accession negotiations approached, the focus on democracy was also increasingly overshadowed by issues related to Cyprus. Greece had threatened to block eastern European states' accession to the EU if the Greek part of the island were not also admitted, apparently in contradiction to the long-held EU line that only a united Cyprus should be accepted into the Union. Once the divided island was admitted to the EU in 2004, tensions inevitably increased. Ankara pressed for explicit clarification that its obligation to extend the 1963 association agreement and 1995 customs union to new entrants, including Cyprus, did not amount to formal recognition of Greek Cyprus as a sovereign state. Additional spin-offs from differences over Cyprus raised further obstacles. Turkey fretted that it would be obliged to open its ports and airports to Cypriot craft as a result of the opening of accession negotiations; and that it would no longer be able to prevent a Greek Cypriot application to join NATO. The former question was eventually solved through a "rendez-vous" clause, providing for the issue to be revisited one year after talks opened. On the latter issue, it once again took senior-level US intervention, this time to dissuade the Greek Cypriot government from seeking to use the changed situation to its advantage in relation to NATO.

¹⁷ Reported in *Financial Times*, September 7, 2005.

Crucially, by this point, the Turkish response to these vicissitudes of EU policy had become more complex and varied. The reforms introduced during 2005, and in particular the new penal code, owed much to the opening of entry talks appearing more tantalizingly imminent. Some detected, however, a dissipation of the overall reform momentum. One senior EU diplomat lamented that, “Turkey no longer believes in the EU process.”¹⁸ The head of the EU delegation in Ankara revealed that, “In our discussions with the Turkish authorities, we see that somehow there is not the dynamic approach which we saw before December,” and complained of increasing human rights abuses on the part of security forces and a rising anti-Europeanism within sectors of the Turkish population.¹⁹

The AKP government’s tone began to change, dovetailing with a widespread judgment that European hostility to Turkish accession was rising to the surface as the moment of truth approached. Erdogan began more forcefully to couch the reformist logic in terms of democratic consolidation “being desirable *despite*, not because of the EU.” He proposed a list of “Ankara criteria” to supersede the Copenhagen criteria, in order to stress the preeminence of the domestic dynamic.

A combination of factors thus complicated talks leading up to the October 3 deadline for entry talks to commence. Cyprus-related issues expended much negotiating capital. The more politicized domestic European context found expression in Austria’s last minute stand against opening talks; a position that was dropped only after a commitment was made to open talks with Croatia, Austria’s long-standing Balkan client state. The resumption of PKK violence compounded concerns in a number of European chancelleries.

Finally, however, in the early hours on October 3, 2005, in culmination of a 40-year campaign, the EU and Turkey officially opened membership negotiations for a future Turkish accession to the Union. The adopted negotiating framework placed upon Turkey a set of robust and rigorous obligations, subject to intensive EU monitoring. The agreement named 2014 as the earliest possible date for Turkey’s membership, and also stated explicitly that, “negotiations are an open-ended process, the outcome of which cannot be guaranteed beforehand.”²⁰ On November 9, 2005, the European Commission released a revised accession partnership document

18 Quoted in *The Economist*, June 4, 2005, p. 31.

19 *Turkish Daily News*, March 3, 2005.

20 European Commission, *Negotiating Framework for Turkey*, October 3, 2005, <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement>.

that identified short- and medium-term priority areas in which Turkey would be required to make progress, including democracy and the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities, regional issues and international obligations, as well as a set of economic reforms.²¹ For the first time, conditions and commitments, at this stage, were introduced in relation to political party independence and corruption.

Much of the rhetoric surrounding these apparently historic moves seemed designed almost deliberately to undercut their import. President Chirac's line, that "negotiations don't mean entry," became cited routinely. The French Parliament simultaneously stepped up its demands that Turkey formally recognize the attacks carried out against Armenians between 1915 and 1923 as "genocide." Ankara complained that this amounted to the EU once again introducing additional conditions to keep Turkey at bay. It was now frequently pointed out that accession negotiations would provide more than 70 occasions for the use of the veto, and for Cyprus, Austria, Germany or other skeptics to use ostensibly technocratic issues as means of obfuscation. Angela Merkel's investiture as German chancellor in November 2005 brought an opponent of Turkish entry to the top-table of European decision-making. Indeed, paradoxically, as entry talks opened and Turkey attained this long coveted step forward in its relations with the EU, the mood and prospects for eventual Turkish membership had perhaps never seemed so bleak. Within a short space of time, France and Austria were already threatening to block a "chapter" of the negotiations covering educational and scientific cooperation by linking this to the issue of Kurdish rights – the British and Spanish governments were firmest in arguing that such moves represented unacceptable delaying tactics.

Assessing the International Response

Relative to the other cases analyzed in this volume, Turkey clearly represents one of the more successful cases of international influence over democratization. This has indeed become the standard mantra. The EU is widely seen to have made a significant impact on Turkey's steady progress towards democratic consolidation. Few would question the assumption that the carrot of EU membership has provided a key external impulse to the process of political reform witnessed in Turkey, in particular under the AKP government elected in 2002. This account testifies to the extent to

21 Commission of the European Communities, *On the Principles, Priorities, and Conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with Turkey*, November 9, 2005, <http://www.eu.int/comm/enlargement>.

which concrete, incremental advances in this reform process can be linked very directly and temporally to the main qualitative step-changes in EU policy. The Helsinki decision to grant Turkey candidate status unleashed a particularly potent reform incentive, as was evident in the positions and revised self-definition of the moderate Islamists who assumed power in Turkey in 2002. The opening of accession negotiations, on October 3, 2005, provided both recognition and reward for the reform efforts undertaken by the Turkish government, while also acting as a “showcase” incentive for other would-be reformers. Turkish reformers have pursued EU accession in part for economic and security reasons, but perhaps most notably as a means of underpinning democratic reform.

However, the preceding analysis suggests that it is legitimate to look beyond this somewhat evident, incontestable and much-repeated judgment, and to signal a number of rather more subtle or second-order observations that qualify the standard mantra. Six such points are pertinent to broader democracy promotion debates.

First, while the instrument of EU accession has, over successive enlargements, proved to be a potent democracy-embedding and -enabling instrument, it is a tool that in Turkey the EU has wielded *almost in spite of itself*. This is a key lesson to emerge from the detailed account of European policies towards Turkey: if the reward of entry into the EU succeeded in pushing Turkey towards democratic consolidation, it did so with many in Europe at times almost appearing to hope that it would *fail* to do so. It is difficult to rebut completely the suggestion that the EU incrementally tightened democracy-related conditions less in the hope of their achievement than as the equivalent of a prohibitively expensive club membership fee. “Be careful what you wish for” might be an apt aphorism for the EU’s democracy promotion strategy in Turkey.

Second, and related to this, beyond the membership “carrot,” much of EU policy was *not* about democratization in Turkey. Indeed, it appeared to be increasingly *less* about this declared objective. Rather, it was about Cyprus; it was about Europe’s identity and internal “coherence;” it was about “getting Turkey in” versus “keeping Turkey out.” However, it was not solely, or even primarily perhaps, about calibrating a response specifically to the ebb and flow of democratic reform in Turkey. Indeed, some analysts observed a widening rupture between those genuinely concerned with Turkish democracy and those focused on European identity.²² While

22 T. Diez and B. Rumelili, “Open the Door,” *World Today* 60, no. 8, issue 9, 2003, p. 35.

Ankara looked towards Europe for affirmation of its reforms, European leaders considered Turkish membership in terms of assets and liabilities. Contrary to common assumptions, support for democracy was not coeval with support for accession, nor its absence with the denial of accession.

Third, such caveats apply – in even greater dosage – to the policy of the United States. US strategy was more about pressing the EU to incorporate Turkey as quickly as possible – as a strategically useful instrument for US foreign policy in the region – than it was about crafting democratic change. While Turkey’s entry into the EU remained part of US long-term security interests, it was not clear Washington had fully accepted that Turkish membership would mean that Turkey would look more to Brussels and less to Washington.²³

Arguably, in its impatience to see Turkey accepted into the EU, the United States – along with the UK and several of Turkey’s other most ardent supporters amongst EU member states – has been overly-accepting of a limited form of democracy in Turkey. It might be asked whether this reflected merely a tactical desire, better to push for democratic deepening with Turkey safely locked-into accession negotiations; or, whether it expressed an actual preference for a form of “bounded democracy,” sufficient to improve basic rights and moderate Islam, without undermining the military-guaranteed stability of the Kemalist state.

A fourth doubt is whether the EU “conditionality machine” has sufficed to render the momentum of Turkish reform irreversible. At the time of this writing, the probability appears extremely high that the EU may not carry through on its promise to grant Turkey membership. One conclusion from the above account might be that this is of little significance. The Turkish case might be cited to argue that far greater pro-democracy influence is derived from the *prospect* rather than the *reality* of EU membership. This requires some qualification to the standard assertion that enlargement has been and remains the EU’s most powerful foreign policy tool: the evolution of Turkish politics might suggest that it is not so much enlargement per se that influences, but the EU’s ability to convince states on its periphery that membership is at least a reasonable possibility.

However, while there might be some truth in this contention, it is still possible that events will prove more accurate exactly the opposite conclusion: namely, that EU and Turkish politics have become so deeply and

23 Carlucci and S. Larrabee, “Revitalizing U.S.-Turkey Relations,” *Washington Times*, June 8, 2005.

inextricably entwined, that withdrawal of the membership carrot could still undermine the prospects of comprehensive democratic consolidation.

This leads to a fifth point, that the Turkey case raises the potential danger of democratic progress being *overly* determined by international actors. The design of Turkish reform priorities around increasingly detailed and demanding European stipulations has engendered concerns over the strength of local “ownership” of such reforms. On several occasions, the Turkish administration has dropped legislative proposals making clear that they have done so only upon EU insistence and without “believing in” the decision. Indeed, unlike previous accession candidates, Turkey has been obliged not merely to promise but also to deliver specific reforms at each stage in its path towards accession negotiations, having the entire rhythm of its democratization processes match that of its relations with the EU.²⁴

One result is that, while EU conditionality has prodded Turkey along the path of reform, the overall process of political change and rapprochement with the EU still means very different things to different constituencies within Turkey, as domestic responses have reflected quite distinctive interpretations of future prospects. The military gradually accepted reform and a diminution of its own role as it saw the EU as offering protection of the Kemalist state against the rise of Islam. The moderate Islamists of the AKP moved towards supporting EU accession in their calculation that European democratic norms would provide protection against the military. It is still possible that the tensions inherent in this situation could surface and complicate the deepening and consolidation of democratic reform. Even as entry talks commenced at the end of 2005, many in Brussels opined that Turkey might still eventually decide that the loss of national sovereignty and degree of EU intrusion was simply too great, and that Ankara rather than the EU would be enlargement’s spoiler.

A sixth and final observation is that Turkey demonstrates a success of strategic inducement more than the conveyance of democratic norms through *in situ* democracy-related assistance. The latter strand of policy remained surprisingly limited, behind the big set-piece debates on Turkish EU membership. The European Commission commenced a significant program of political reform assistance only after 2001, and funded projects oriented overwhelmingly to state institutions. US and European governments’ bilateral programs were meager. There was little synchronicity between the two levels of policy, despite Turkey represent-

24 F. Hakura, “Europe and Turkey: The End of the Beginning,” *Open Democracy*, October 5, 2005.

ing an ideal and perhaps unique opportunity to correct the often-witnessed “macro-micro” divide in Western democracy policies (a term capturing the disconnect between political-level diplomacy and the elaboration of democracy aid projects).

Recognition of these lessons is important not only for future steps in Western democracy efforts in Turkey, but also as Turkey’s role in the wider region attracts greater attention. The West appears keen to begin using Turkey as a model to convince skeptics of the feasibility of Arab democratization. Care is warranted here. Many Turks are wary of being portrayed as an “Islamic model,” which they fear will strengthen the role of Islam in Turkey and weaken Turkey’s ties to the West. Moreover, Turkey’s potential as a “model” for Middle East reform is limited by its image in the region, which for many Arabs is tarnished by the country’s imperial past, its non-Arab profile and its strong ties to Israel. This will be a future lesson to bear in mind with regard to this apparently successful case of democracy promotion.

Recommendations

To a greater extent than the other case studies examined in this volume, in Turkey the broad parameters of democracy strategy are already established, with the detailed negotiations over EU entry conditions now underway. Turkey has been granted the “reward” of accession talks its government, political elite and many Turkish citizens craved for so long. It is consequently locked into a formal, bureaucratic process that will determine in very precise ways a range of institutional and governance reforms. This does not mean, however, that important additional steps are not required in both European and, the so-far limited, US policies. Intensive debate preceded the decision to open EU entry talks in October 2005, but Turkey has since largely disappeared from the front pages of the international media. However, far from a less engaged posture now being warranted, intensified efforts are required in a number of areas if Turkey’s reform process is not to risk reversal. The EU and other members of the international community of democratic states should consider the following recommendations:

- *Clarify a democracy route-map to accession.*

The EU needs to strike a fine balance in its democracy promotion strategy now that accession negotiations have formally opened. On the one hand, it would risk harming the process of democratic consolidation in Turkey by introducing additional politically-related entry criteria and starting to ratchet-up political conditionality in a way that would be interpreted

ed as a disingenuous rouse to delay Turkish membership. On the other hand, the EU should resist the temptation to focus only on the technocratic “chapters” of entry talks, in the judgment that Turkey has already achieved a sufficient degree of democracy to combine political openness with Western-oriented stability. A clear “democracy road-map” could usefully clarify remaining issues of concern, and be phrased in such a way as to guard against any further “hurdle-raising” as talks progress.

- *Offer incremental benefits associated with EU membership.*

The EU should seek to “front-load” the ceding to Turkey of some of the de facto benefits of integration during what will potentially be a decade-long negotiation process. It should also seek to de-link complications relating to the Cyprus issue from its democracy-deepening concerns in Turkey. These steps could help reassure Turks, unnerved by internal EU wranglings and the apparent growing hostility to Turkish membership during 2005.

- *Increase technical support for reform, clarifying European and US roles.*

Democracy assistance should be stepped up and broadened beyond support for state-led “legislative approximation.” Political reform support needs to be rebalanced away from a hitherto stress on top-down, formal institutional dynamics. It is in this area that greater coordination is merited between the US and European donors. Cooperation at this level, indeed, would be more helpful than US calls in the future for the EU to “hurry up and stop prevaricating on concluding entry negotiations.” Past evidence suggests that this type of US approach would be perceived as unacceptable interference by Europeans and thus would be counter-productive.

- *Make the case for accession.*

The EU should commence work to prepare the ground for eventual admission of Turkey as well as assess what the impact would be if the membership promise is not fulfilled. Debate on this question should be encouraged now by commissioning research, public opinion polling, educational exchanges, friendship committees and public diplomacy campaigns. The temptation should be resisted of focusing on detailed and more prosaic aspects of entry negotiations in the hope of “parking” the more existential question that relates to the EU’s future identity and limit.

- *Devise an alternative to accession, capable of preventing democratic reversals.*

Following the abovementioned sentiment, the EU should begin to consider the feasibility of a “Plan B.” European diplomats have long made a virtue of the fact that no such second preference was being deliberated actively in any detail. A number of political developments within Europe – and in particular the French rejection of the EU constitutional treaty and the change of government in Germany – make this attitude look like “head in the sand” recklessness. If factors extraneous to the promotion of democracy have widened the odds on Turkey’s accession to the EU, then creative plans will be required to salvage – from the resulting wreckage of European-Turkish relations – the aim of and prospects for assisting democratic consolidation.