

# ISPI

Working Papers

ISTITUTO PER GLI STUDI DI POLITICA INTERNAZIONALE



## Programma Turchia

WP - 11

**Between the EU and the Middle East:  
Turkish Foreign Policy under  
the AKP Government, 2002-2007**

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BETWEEN THE EU AND THE MIDDLE EAST: TURKISH FOREIGN  
POLICY UNDER THE AKP GOVERNMENT, 2002-2007

*Philip Robins*

*Executive Summary*

The following headline propositions about Turkish foreign policy since 2002 form the central arguments made in this paper:

- That the *cohabitation* that has characterized the relationship between a post-Islamist government and a Kemalist state has not resulted in the conflict and incoherence in foreign policy that many had feared
- That it is difficult to arrive at any firm conclusions about the essential moderation or de-Islamisation of the foreign policy of Turkey's governing group, the Justice & Development Party (AKP), given the role and profile of the Turkish armed forces in containing the party in government
- That, while the AKP government has increased Turkey's involvement in a range of Middle East and Islamic affairs, it would not be correct to describe them as a decisive and ideologically driven break with previous policies
- That the AKP government has pursued an instrumentalist EU agenda, with convergence on membership regarded as a device through which to secure the party's future in Turkey
- That Ankara under the leadership of the AKP adopted a fresh and bold approach to the Cyprus issue in 2004, resulting in a breakthrough on the Turkish Cypriot side for which it has not been properly rewarded
- That having commenced accession negotiations with the EU, the AKP government has dragged its feet as far as further liberal reform at home is concerned
- That the electoral cycle in Turkey (focusing on the lead-up to 2007) has further deterred the AKP government from forging ahead with a liberal reform agenda, especially given the ultra-nationalist atmosphere that increasingly prevails in the country
- That Turkey's failure to render the active support requested by the US in its 2003 invasion of Iraq has resulted in the evaporation of the "specialness" in the relationship, that was originally generated during the Iraq-Kuwait crisis in 1990, under the Bush senior administration

- That the failure of the ‘securitisation’ strategy in Iraq has resulted in a more textured policy towards that country, embracing, for example, closer commercial relations with Iraqi Kurdistan
- That Turkey has been reluctant to jeopardize the hard earned stability that characterises its bilateral relations with Iran and Syria, even if Western opinion is inclined to vilify their ruling regimes.

### *1. Introduction*

On 15<sup>th</sup> December 2006, the EU summit took the decision to suspend eight of the 35 chapters that form the agenda for Turkey’s accession negotiations. While the move was finely judged, in that it avoided the long feared “train crash” in ties, it was a public demonstration of the choppiness of the bilateral relationship. As such, the decision soured what had hitherto been an encouragingly productive atmosphere that stretched back to 2002. That the trip-up had come over the emotive but parochial issue of Cyprus added to the resentment on the Turkish side, and drove negative feelings about the long-term prospects for relations. The deterioration was a salutary reminder of how quickly the atmospherics could change. Just two years earlier, Euro-Turkish relations had seemed unstoppable.

It was with respect to Europe that Turkey’s Justice & Development Party (AKP) led government posted the two most noteworthy achievements of its first four years in office. The naming of a date for EU accession “negotiations”, though it was missed in December 2002, was secured two years later, with the process commencing on time on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2005. Turkey’s EU trajectory has acquired since then a tangibility that even the implementation of a partial Customs Union in 1996 failed to achieve. The other major breakthrough came in 2004 over the Cyprus issue, with the AKP government, through an adroit policy repositioning, at a stroke marginalizing the Turkish Cypriot hardliners and helping to deliver a positive outcome to the April 2004 referendum in northern Cyprus. That the peace process failed on the Greek Cypriot “no” vote was no fault of Ankara’s.

The other main issue of controversy in Turkish foreign policy since 2002 came with the decision of 1<sup>st</sup> March 2003 to decline the role envisaged for it by the US in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The decisive factor here, though, was not a surge of Islamist radicalism through the veins of the AKP parliamentary party. Practically all Turkey approved the outcome, with the presidency and government alike opposed to the dispatch of large numbers of US troops to Turkey and thence to Iraq. Though the decision-making process was not pretty, it has freed Ankara to build a more constructive and realistic policy towards Iraq.

If the Middle East and Islamic world have featured more regularly in Turkey’s foreign policy agenda, it has as much resulted from reaction as initiation. From civil strife in Iraq and the deterioration in the Palestinian territories, to Iran’s pursuit of a nuclear capacity and conflict between Israel and Hizbollah in southern

Lebanon, Turkey has had to develop new policy positions. The shocking double bomb attacks in Istanbul in November 2003 brought home that Turkey was not immune to extremist Islamist violence, whether its government was Kemalist or post-Islamist. The dominant figures of Turkish external relations since 2002, prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and foreign minister Abdullah Gul, responded to these and other outrages by arguing for liberal reform in the Islamic world<sup>1</sup>, a message regarded generally with favour among Turkey's Western allies.

The main objective of this paper is to focus on Turkish foreign policy from the AKP election success in November 2002 to the beginning of the new domestic electoral cycle in 2007. In doing so, the key themes of the work are Turkey's foreign relations with Europe and the wider West; and relations with the Middle East. By doing this, the paper sets out to evaluate a key passage in Turkish foreign policy.

## 2. *The Urgent Mission: The AKP and EU Gravity*

When the AKP government came to power it hit the ground running. The object of its attentions was the European Union. At face value this may seem surprising. A number of the leading members of the party had previously been prominent within the Welfare Party, a more explicitly Islamist party, that headed a coalition government in the mid 1990s. Welfare was implacably opposed to membership of the EU, which its then leader famously referred to as "a cauldron of Christianity". It was in reaction to the strong Kemalist state backlash against Welfare that a large proportion of its younger, more technocratic figures decided to split from the older generation that controlled the leadership. This path brought them to ideological redefinition, membership of the AKP as a specifically conservative party, and, as an aspect of this, a policy *volte-face* in supporting Turkey's EU membership bid.

There was an instrumental and more urgent reason for making convergence with the EU the AKP government's top foreign policy priority. The trauma of the 28<sup>th</sup> February 1997 process, the military-led strategy aimed at hounding Welfare from power, was still a raw memory. The AKP was desperate that it should never be as vulnerable as its predecessor party. The EU, with its core principles of liberal democracy and political pluralism, seemed the perfect way of counter-veiling the Turkish military, with its track record of intervening in the country's party politics. It was the gravitational pull of the EU's political norms that would guarantee the long-term survival of the AKP, regardless of the antipathy of the Turkish military.

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<sup>1</sup> For a definitive statement by both men in support of these ideas see the Address by HE Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister of Turkey, to Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2003, and the Statement by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gul, at the 31<sup>st</sup> Session of the ICO, Istanbul, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2004.

Initially, the energies of the AKP government focused on the EU summit, some six weeks away when the outcome of the election became clear. The aim of the new government was to elicit from the EU a date for the commencement of accession “negotiations”<sup>2</sup>. Erdogan, the AKP leader, threw himself into the fray, visiting all of the major EU capitals, with a view to preparing the ground for a successful summit outcome. It was this initial burst of personal diplomacy that was responsible for the emergence of solid working relations between the AKP and established European governments, notably those led by Messieurs Berlusconi, Blair and Schroeder. These three leaders were to become Erdogan’s main allies within the Union over the medium term.

It soon became clear that the major obstacle to moving along the Turkish membership bid at the Copenhagen summit was the Cyprus issue. In spite of the fact that Cyprus had long emerged as a policy sacred cow for the Turkish establishment, the AKP government did not flinch from approaching the issue with fresh eyes. In conjunction with ideas emanating from the UK, Erdogan tried to pull off a grand, three-way compromise in the Danish capital, the third side of the triangle relating to European defence. It was a bold move, but one that only succeeded in resolving the defence issue, owing to a combination of inexperience, lack of time and entrenched interests. In the absence of a conjuror’s flourish, Turkey got the best that it could have expected from the summit: an EU decision to review the issue of Turkish accession negotiations at its summit in two years time.

There was despondency in Ankara when the outcome of the summit was known. However, the response on the part of the government was far from being negative. It drew two conclusions from Copenhagen. The first was that the reform strategy that had begun belatedly and tentatively under the previous Ecevit administration needed to be not only re-endorsed, but driven ahead with a new sense of purpose and speed. In short, Turkey needed to make it so clear that it was committed to a broad programme of liberal reform that it would become impossible for the EU to deny it membership on this basis. The second was that Turkey needed to solve the Cyprus issue once and for all, to ensure that a narrow, regional issue could no longer obstruct the country’s wider, strategic aims. These two goals would later become the centerpieces of the AKP government in power. First, though, Turkey had to deal with an even more pressing issue: the imminent war for regime change in Iraq.

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<sup>2</sup> The phrase “accession negotiations” is of course a polite euphemism for the adoption of the *acquis communautaire*, a subtly seemingly lost on the Turkish leadership, as the bruising summit of December 2004 would illustrate.

### *3. The Defining Moment? The AKP, the US and the Iraq War*

Turkey's decision to refuse the US the level of cooperation it sought prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq has been lauded by some as a courageous move. In truth, whatever one thinks about the decision itself, it was not Turkish foreign policy's finest hour. The decision itself was bedeviled by miscalculation and confusion, epitomized by the fact that the parliamentary motion was nominally carried, but fell on a technicality. What the whole saga demonstrates perhaps is that it is better to arrive at the right decision, albeit through flawed means, than to have a smooth process that delivers an imprudent outcome.

That Turkey took the right decision on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2003 is, a few diehards apart, widely viewed as beyond doubt, at least as far as the Iraq issue itself is concerned. This is no mere product of hindsight, though most Turks are no doubt relieved that they have not become embroiled in the sort of open-ended military commitment in Iraq that resonates with their collective, traumatized memories of the last years of the Ottoman Empire. A long-term military presence in northern Iraq would at very least have exacerbated Turkish-Kurdish tensions on both sides of the border, as well as exciting suspicions among Iraq's other neighbours as to the perceived hidden, neo-Ottoman ambitions of the Turkish state. Furthermore, a close association with US conduct on the ground, over which Ankara would inevitably have had little influence, would have tarred Turkey with the same brush, thereby re-establishing the division with the Arab Middle East, which has only begun to soften comparatively recently.

The main reason why there is broad agreement on the wisdom of the policy outcome in March 2003, however, is that the vast majority of Turks willed that it might be the case, even as they assumed that the actual outcome would be the opposite, and that in the end their country would be obliged to line up behind the US. One can quibble about the precise veracity of the public opinion polling conducted at the time. What is beyond doubt is that a decisive majority of the population of the country opposed band-wagoning the US in Iraq. It has to be admitted that even in a super elite-oriented country like Turkey, public opinion can count for something, even in the arena of foreign policy-making. The role of the public is more likely to be enhanced where an issue has been subject to a long-running media focus, and where it is emotive in substance. Under such circumstances, it is only surprising that more than the 90 or so rebel AKP deputies, as sensitized as anywhere to voter preferences, did not break ranks with the government in the parliamentary vote on the issue.

That Turkey had no appetite for participating in what would have ended up as "an Imperial alliance of three", can be seen on the part of most of the institutional players in the approach to the 1<sup>st</sup> March vote. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, formally at least the voice of the nation, was publicly and implacably opposed. Much of the military in private was reported as having serious misgivings, although this did not stop the top brass trying to retrieve the situation once it was

too late. The opportunistic parliamentary opposition, Deniz Baykal's CHP, voted against in a display of self-centred, party politics. The AKP government, though clearly unenthusiastic, dared not oppose the motion for fear that this would be attributed to a secret anti-Western, Islamist agenda. The Turkish Foreign Ministry, still a bastion of Kemalism, had already prolonged the painstaking bilateral negotiations with the US, cognizant of the long-term implications of the moment. With such a de facto domestic alliance against close cooperation with US over Iraq, embracing elite and mass, Kemalist and post-Islamist, and ranging across the main institutions of the country, the remarkable thing is that the pro-US position did not fail considerably earlier.

Of course there was a cost incurred in the 1<sup>st</sup> March vote in terms of Turkey's bilateral relationship with the US. The perception from Washington was that Turkey had strung the Americans along before publicly letting them down at a crucial time. With the onset of hot weather approaching, there was little room for flexibility. The US therefore pressed ahead with its timetable, initiating hostilities on 20<sup>th</sup> March, less than three weeks after the Turkish vote. In so doing, Washington was obliged to rely solely on an invasion from the south, with only Kurdish irregulars to worry Saddam's forces in the north. There was then to be no Plan B. Fortunately for the fate of Turkish-US relations none was required. Had things gone wrong on the battlefield, Turkey could have ended up being almost as unpopular in the US as France.

As it was, Turkey-US relations deteriorated to the lowest level they had seen since the US arms embargo in 1975. For Bush administration insiders, those who had viewed Turkey, unrealistically in view of geopolitical realities, as an unquestioningly reliable ally, the disillusionment was particularly profound. It was among officials like then deputy of defence Paul Wolfowitz, who remembered Turkey's staunch support against Iraq under President Ozal in 1990, that the gap between expectation and disappointment was at its greatest. While Turkey and the US remain bound together as allies, notably through their common membership of Nato, it was the specialness in the relationship that was the major casualty of the war of regime change in Iraq. For Turkish-American relations, the magic was gone.

It was not only Turkey's relations with the US that was affected by the negative outcome of 1<sup>st</sup> March. The stark reality facing the Turkish parliament had also included a choice over the deployment of its own forces. Overnight Ankara's whole security-oriented strategy towards Iraq was undermined. Suddenly, Turkey's "red lines approach" to the issue of the future of Iraqi Kurdistan, which was based on the premise that political developments in northern Iraq had direct existential implications for the Turkish state, completely collapsed. Ankara's rejection, for example, of grey formulations for Iraqi sovereignty, such as federalism, became, in the absence of Turkish forces on the ground, utterly unsustainable. The immediate frustrations inherent in such a reality were hardly disguised from view. The military's then heir apparent, General Yasar Buyukanit,

controversially lambasted the Turkish government for having no policy towards Iraq, tantamount to a public lament for the demise of this security-oriented strategy. Such hard realities as the loss of more than 100 truck drivers to kidnapping and murder, illustrate the reduced circumstances of Turkey's influence in Iraq and the vulnerability of its interests.

It took some time before a new spirit of realism began to permeate the Turkish position, as the transformed realities of insurgency and instability started to become clear. It was followed by the emergence of a series of piecemeal positions, that, when aggregated over time, have begun to resemble a policy. They are notable for being based more on diplomatic and economic factors than military ones, more on soft power than hard. These policy building blocks include:

- Dialogue with Iraq's other neighbouring states (eventually extending to the government of Iraq itself) to improve the stable management of the Iraq issue across the Middle East
- The abandonment of a narrow, "securitized" policy towards Iraq, focused almost exclusively on Iraqi Kurdistan and adjacent, potential flashpoints, such as Kirkuk
- A more politically inclusive approach to Iraq, formally based on a strategy of "equal distance"
- Good relations with a number of parties and personalities in Iraq, notably the Ja'fari-led transitional Iraqi government<sup>3</sup>, and his Da'wa Party, but also extending to Iraq's other main actors, including the Kurdish parties. Indeed, Ankara has pleasantly discovered that Iraq's Shia parties are better disposed to secular Turkey than other Sunni countries in the region
- A move away from an ethnically-inclined policy preoccupation with the Iraqis of Turcoman origin, who at the January 2004 election showed themselves to be more nationally than ethnically oriented. In particular, Turkey's exclusive preoccupation with the Iraqi Turcoman Front was revealed as being grossly misplaced
- A more functionally inclusive approach to Iraqi issues, covering not merely military affairs, but most importantly the encouragement of commercial ties, as well as the provision of other services
- A more flexible consideration of Iraqi politics and its constitution-building process, which resulted in Ankara being prepared to embrace Iraq's federal constitution.

So, should we view the fateful vote of 1<sup>st</sup> March and its consequences with respect to Iraq policy and more widely as a defining moment in the foreign policy of

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Ja'fari's first trip abroad as head of the new government was to Ankara, in May 2005.

Turkey in the 2000s? From the perspective of Turkish foreign policy-making, that would be grossly unfair. Turkey's foreign policy bureaucracy, focused primarily on the Foreign Ministry, is rarely so confused and incoherent. Moreover, even at the government level this too would be unfair. The delay, prevarication and confusion of the AKP government has not been repeated since, certainly not in such spectacular fashion. With Erdogan and Gul holding the positions of prime minister and foreign minister for nearly four years, unencumbered by the difficulties of dealing with coalition partners, government coherence in foreign policy is arguably better than at any time since Suleyman Demirel and Hikmet Cetin respectively held the portfolios some 12 years before.

But should then the Iraq issue be seen as definitive in a wider sense, as regarding Turkey's relations with the US and the triangular relationship with the EU, or even for that matter the Middle East more generally? Turkish-US relations have certainly suffered, especially at an insider elite level. The anxiety that seems to have characterized every high level visit in either direction since is testimony to the loss of a once comfortable friendship. The considered view from the US seems to be that relations will not fully recover until the Iraq embroglio is behind us. Though such a prediction may be meant to reassure, it could be tantamount to a generation-long blight.

From among those European politicians that applauded Turkey for standing up to US pressure, there appears to have been no dividend. The French right, for instance, has supplanted its view of Turkey as having proven its essential Europeanness by its approach to Iraq, with a more recent view of Turkey as alien and uneuropean. With respect to the Middle East, Turkey has less defined a new strategy than reaffirmed two old ones, one related to the experiences of the early 1920s, the other to the legacy of the 1950s. First, that Turkey is nervous of allowing large numbers of foreign forces, particularly those from a superpower, to decamp onto its soil on an indefinite basis. In the Turkish debate about the arrival of American troops in 2003, there were echoes of British forces entering Istanbul in the aftermath of World War One, when the external objective was the break-up of the Anatolian heartland. Second, that Ankara reserves the right to de-link its global, strategic relations from specific regional issues, especially as far as the Middle East is concerned. In short, an 80 year memory of trauma can still prove more potent than 50 years of alliance cooperation with the US.

#### *4. The Milestones: Cyprus Revisionism & EU Negotiations*

When AKP leader Erdogan failed to pull off his audacious diplomatic coup at Copenhagen in 2002, he retreated into the Ankara orthodoxy of policy on Cyprus. This policy was to back the northern Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktas, a latter-day "Mr Niet", in his policy of obstructing all attempts by the international community to bring about any creative movement in peace-making. The Turkish Foreign Ministry, much of which is fixated with the Cyprus issue, seemed ready

to forgive Erdogan his flexibility in the approach to Copenhagen on the grounds of naivety. But Erdogan's retreat had been purely tactical. Erdogan and Gul, by now premier and foreign minister respectively, were simply biding their time until a propitious opportunity presented itself.

They did not have to wait long. UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, was persuaded to revisit his plan for a Cyprus settlement in the first weeks of 2004. The AKP government seized the moment. Foreign minister Gul affirmed that Turkey would do whatever was necessary in order no longer to be perceived as the main obstacle to a Cyprus breakthrough. Ankara adopted a bold new approach in both style and substance: whenever presented with a new position, the government's policy was to embrace it quickly and unequivocally. This simple but effective diplomatic device completely changed the negotiating dynamics over Cyprus. Suddenly the Turkish side was no longer seen as intransigent. It was the Greek Cypriot side, cosy in its occupation of the moral high ground, and the exclusivity of its international recognition, which suddenly was wrong-footed and suspicious.

There was, however, one key problem. The new Annan Plan contained a provision for the submission of the renovated blueprint to a plebiscite on both sides of the island, in the event of a failure to conclude a full, negotiated outcome. The referenda had been included as an instrument with which to neutralize Denktas. But it was soon to rebound as a diplomatic device. By the time the referenda were staged on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2004 the limits of Denktas's influence had already been exposed through the election defeat of the rejectionist government in the north. It was therefore no surprise that there was a 65% vote in favour of the Annan Plan in the north. What should have been an instrument of progress was taken over and used as an instrument of rejection by a *de facto* coalition of the dominant political order in Greek Cyprus, with 75% of the voters rejecting the proposal.

The outcome of the Cyprus referenda at first seemed well suited for Turkey. After-all, it was now on the side of the angels, without actually having to implement any of the concessions to which it had agreed. President Papadopoulos was now the new Denktas. The body language of the EU and US seemed inclined to reward Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots alike for their constructive engagement. But these omens were misleading. By the time of the referenda, membership of the EU for the Greek controlled Republic of Cyprus was already a formality. The EU had chosen to break one of its cardinal rules: to import the instability of the Cyprus issue rather than export the stability of a "security community" to Cyprus. With Nicosia from May 2004 on the inside of the EU, Turkey was faced by the potential of a double Greek veto. The EU had simply run out of *quid pro quo*, sweeteners to extend to Turkey over Cyprus<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> In 1995 the EU offered Turkey a Customs Union as a *quid pro quo* for the commencement of accession negotiations with Cyprus. In 1999 the EU offered Turkey candidate status as a *quid pro*

Initially, the EU talked a good game, notably in terms of ending the isolation of northern Cyprus. But more than two and a half years later, the steps in this direction have been small and faltering. The promised direct EU-north Cyprus trade has yet to materialize, while an economic assistance programme has only recently started to be dispersed in reduced form. Political gestures, such as Jack Straw's symbolic visit to northern Cyprus when the UK held the EU presidency, and Frank-Walter Steinmeier's reception of Mehmet Ali Talat, the TRNC "president", in an official building in Berlin, though appreciated, were small beer when compared to the post April 2004 expectations. Instead of having neutralized Cyprus as an obstacle to future EU membership, the island would later come back to haunt Turkey's relations with the Union.

If the AKP's Cyprus policy had proved to be a valiant failure, Ankara would do considerably better in its focused and sustained attempts to bring about convergence with the EU over the issue of liberal reform. Turkey had embraced the EU reform agenda before the election of the AKP in November 2002. In 2001, Turkey adopted a series of amendments to its Constitution, influenced by its EU candidacy, bestowed at the Helsinki summit in December 1999. In May of the following year an important meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) had endorsed the idea of rapid convergence with the EU. Taking its lead from this decision, the three party coalition led by prime minister Bulent Ecevit embraced an ambitious programme of pro-EU reforms. Against such a recent backdrop, it was easy enough for the AKP to forge ahead with an ambitious reform agenda of its own.

Between November 2002 and end 2004, the AKP government was at its reform-minded zenith, adopting no less than eight EU-style harmonization packages, as Ankara enthusiastically attempted to embrace the Union's *acquis communautaire*. The substance of some of these reforms was dazzling. It is worth reminding ourselves of their range and intensity:

- a new, more liberal civil code and press code was adopted
- capital punishment was abolished
- state security courts were abolished
- moves were taken to reduce the impact of the armed forces on politics, notably through reform of the hitherto military-dominated NSC
- the authoritarian Emergency Rule in south-east Anatolia was lifted
- the ban on education and broadcasting in Kurdish was lifted

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*quo* for the decision that Cyprus should accede to EU membership. Then in 2004 Turkey was given a start date for its accession talks with the EU as a *quid pro quo* for opening its ports and airports in 2006.

- implementation of the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has become mandatory.

Taken on their own, the reform programme was not without its faults. There was a suspicion that some changes would remain paper reforms, nominal changes which would have no clout in reality. This presumably helps to explain the repetitive nature of some of the packages. In some parts of the Penal Code unsatisfactory formulations, such as the infamous Article 301<sup>5</sup>, were used to replace previous clauses, thereby helping to maintain some illiberal aspects in practice. Bureaucratic obstacles have been placed in the way of teaching and broadcasting in Kurdish. Moreover, there was concern that while NSC reform might eliminate a conduit through which the military routinely interfered in what were essentially civilian political issues, other avenues of influence could be identified, most nakedly through the use of public pronouncements on a range of issues.

Even allowing for such imperfections, the harmonization packages were breathtaking in their ambition and breadth. They were a clear statement of how effectively the Turkish political establishment could act when aligned behind a policy position. And they undoubtedly had a positive effect upon life in Turkey. The fact that there is now far less torture in Turkey than there was even a handful of years before is a notable achievement. They may yet come to be viewed as the high watermark as far as a will for EU convergence in Turkey was concerned. It was therefore no more than fairness when the December 2004 European summit decided to name a date for the commencement of accession negotiations in October 2005.

##### *5. The Ideological Debate in AKP Foreign Policy*

If flexibility in revisionism, and liberalism in reform have characterized the AKP government's approach to Turkey's milestone priorities of Cyprus and the EU, does this mean that fears of the radicalization of foreign relations under its leadership have proven misconceived? The answer to this question is a qualified no. The basis for such a conclusion is twofold. First, that the AKP has been a new and cautious actor in the realm of foreign policy-making in Turkey, and has, most importantly, been constrained by the checks and balances that exist in the system. Second, that there have been enough glimpses of a willingness, perhaps even an enthusiasm, in some quarters to reorient Turkey's foreign relations in a different direction that firm conclusions about a western vocation being safe in the hands of the AKP will require at least another term in office.

The issue of checks and balances is a straightforward one. The experience of many of the AKP's senior cadres in the Welfare Party of the mid 1990s was

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<sup>5</sup> It was Article 301 that was used by ultra-nationalist lawyers to open a case against a number of Turkey's leading authors, notably Orhan Pamuk.

chastening. It was literally psyched out of power by a sustained and uncompromising campaign by the Turkish General Staff. This campaign came in response to a series of symbolic acts by the Welfare leadership, which indicated that it was moving forward with an agenda to re-Islamise the public space. This included publicly embracing the various leaders of Turkey's shadowy religious orders. It also included indulging the Iranian embassy, which had become brazen in its celebration of radical Islamist causes. In the course of its campaign, the military made it repeatedly clear to gatherings of secular journalists, businessmen and others that Welfare had to go. The confrontation has acquired the reputation of being a "soft coup". In fact the hardball that the top brass played was anything but soft.

The thorough-going exercise in self-criticism that the less radically-minded members of the Welfare leadership subsequently went through is testimony to the intimidation of the moment. The way forward for the Islamists of the Welfare Party was either modernization and reform, or marginalization. Those who eventually founded the AKP chose the former. By doing so, they tacitly accepted that it would be unfeasible to take the military on in a head-to-head confrontation based on hard power. Their only chance was to adapt to the political milieu in Turkey and try to become a party of power through the ballot box. Hence, it was of enormous importance for the AKP to avoid confrontation with the established order once they had formed a government in November 2002. Whether socialized into genuine moderation or tactically awaiting their opportunity to mount a government coup, the AKP was more or less united in its strategy of restraint.

As to the centre of ideological gravity, the AKP and Erdogan in many ways resemble "New Labour" and Tony Blair. The latter faced their own existential agony in the 1980s, with the key choice being the abandonment of radical socialism, notably the nationalization option, in order to achieve electability. But once established in government, with its manifesto of moderation, the question soon began to be asked "what is power for"? To a discomfiting degree, the same question still dogs Labour, and Blair in his final days. In the case of the AKP, as with Labour, many of the backbench deputies never genuinely embraced the moderating reforms. Instead they gravitated to the new party for a hotch potch of reasons, from the political opportunism of backing a movement with electoral potential, through long standing ties of loyalty to the party's "big beasts", notably Tayyip Erdogan.

It is to keep these restless ideologues happy that the AKP government has indulged in periodic Islamist gestures, notably its spasmodic determination to see the removal of restrictions on the wearing of headscarves, or the *turban*, by women in public spaces. It was with the totemic significance of this issue that the party supported a test case submitted to the European Court of Human Rights. To its surprise, the AKP corner lost both the judgment in 2005, and the subsequent appeal. From that day forth, the AKP's commitment to a European strategy cooled discernibly, in spite of the fact that the ECHR is unrelated to the EU.

### *i) Islamic Conference Organisation*

The headscarves issue is not the only one on which the AKP has shown a hand that, in Turkish terms, is less than entirely secular. In its activities as a member of the Saudi-sponsored Islamic Conference Organisation (OIC), Turkey has significantly increased its profile. Such was the degree of this enhanced engagement, that a retired Turkish academic, Prof Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, was elected secretary-general of the organization in 2004. Of course, such a move can be justified in terms of foreign policy interests, namely to maximize the opportunities at one's disposal. Moreover, the move makes additional good sense in terms of Ankara's traditional chariness of playing a full diplomatic role in the Middle East and the wider Islamic world, a self-restraint that has inhibited Turkish leverage in the region. Again, a greater Turkish involvement in the Islamic world, from Kosovo and Bosnia through to Afghanistan and Lebanon, would seem to justify, necessitate even, a higher Turkish profile. Seen from the perspective of the politics of identity, however, especially when applied to the delicate atmospherics within Turkey, the move appears altogether less benign.

### *ii) Israeli-Palestinian issue*

A second area of concern relates to the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Stretching back to 1996, and the Welfare Party's entry into government, relations with Israel have been a barometer of the Islamist-Kemalist power balance in Turkey. Ten years ago, the armed forces obliged the Welfare-led government to sign important agreements in the sector of military cooperation, in spite of its obvious distaste for the Jewish state. Since the beginning of the 2000s, Turkish-Israeli relations, while still soundly based at an inter-elite level, have cooled somewhat more generally. The main reason for this has been the reaction of the Turkish public to the disproportionate use of state violence by Israel against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Parts of the political elite shared this sense of moral outrage at the conduct of the Israeli occupation authorities. Most notoriously Turkish prime minister Bulent Ecevit referred to the "genocide" of the Palestinians at the hands of Israel, a lapse for which he was required to issue an unequivocal apology under US and other outside pressure.

Tayyip Erdogan has found himself in similarly hot water in some of his apparently off-the-cuff outbursts against Israel, which he has accused of "state terrorism" against the Palestinians. It is certainly the case that Erdogan's expressions of outrage resonated with the sentiments of the wider Turkish public, a reflection of the prime minister's legendary common touch, but also of his apparent willingness to tap into a vein of anti-semitism that runs through much of Turkish society. However, he has seemingly vacillated on the issue, at times refusing to apologise *à la* Ecevit for his views, at others lamenting that he has undermined his reputation with Washington by making such remarks. The issue of Israel and Palestine is arguably the subject on which Erdogan has wrestled most

openly, torn between policy positions that are in turn politically correct and populist.

The dilemma of how exactly to calibrate relations with Israel and the Palestinians has also manifested itself in terms of policy in action. The best example of this was the success of Hamas in the Palestinian elections of January 2006. The reaction of the Quartet, as the benchmark of the international community, to this unexpected outcome was initially guarded. It was followed by the issuing of a three point criteria, conformity with which would be a *sine qua non* for the normalization of contacts: recognition of Israel; a disavowal of terrorist violence; and the acknowledgement of past agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

Turkey, however, broke with the template forged by the Quartet. The AKP government invited a Hamas delegation to visit Ankara in February 2006, making Ankara the first non-Arab destination for the party since its electoral success. The delegation was led by Khalid Mishaal, a controversial figure, whom Israel accuses of master-minding the rejectionist position of the party in exile. The Turkish defence of the visit was weak, maintaining that it just wanted to amplify the position of the Quartet and deliver the message direct to the horse's mouth. In the end, scheduled meetings with Erdogan and Gul in their official capacities were cancelled. The Hamas delegation was formally welcomed at the 'technical' level of deputy foreign minister. Even this diminished level of exchange was shot-through with ambivalence, foreign minister Abdullah Gul welcoming the delegation during a 10 minute meeting at AKP headquarters. Whether Gul meant to give the impression or not, it seemed as if the AKP was desperate to laud the Hamas team, but reluctantly toned down its public recognition under sufferance.

### *iii) Darfur*

A second and more egregious example of the AKP's instinctive desire to dabble in Middle East politics came in relation to Sudan and the Darfur conflict. Unlike Israel and Palestine, this was a subject that the AKP could happily have avoided. In fact, it did the opposite. On this occasion it was Tayyip Erdogan who insisted on attending a meaningless Arab League summit in late March 2006 in Khartoum – the home of an Islamist leaning, military regime – ostensibly to drum up support for the Turkish Cypriots, and to deliver a speech on the "Alliance of Civilisations". Rather than leave it at that, Erdogan made a point of visiting Darfur after the summit, where he proceeded to make controversial remarks denying international concerns about the genocidal actions of pro-government militia in the region. In addition to being gratuitous and inaccurate, the pronouncement was ill-advised given the scrutiny that Turkey continues to be under the charge of Ottoman genocide against the Armenians of eastern Turkey during the First World War.

## *6. A Lengthening Middle East Agenda*

Old school Kemalism would have avoided activism in the Middle East. It would have done so out of contempt for a backward part of the world. It would have done so as a reaffirmation of its embrace of civilization and modernity, all of which are in its eyes to be found in the West. Such a line has been underpinned in the past by the practicalities of foreign policy. For all of its Imperial and Islamic background, Kemalist Turkey was never very good at dealing with the Middle East, as the debacle of the Baghdad Pact at the end of the 1950s well illustrated. For Turkey's secular elite the Middle East was a region to be wary of; to keep at arms' length.

This approach has been more difficult to sustain since the end of the Cold War, and especially since 9/11. Trans-national phenomena, like the spread of radical Islamism and terrorism, together with resource issues like water, have forced Ankara to take the Middle East more seriously. Missile technology has robbed Turkey of its strategic depth vis-à-vis the region, and proliferation has increased the potential costs of this loss. New issues have emerged and evolved. With the Israeli-Palestinian issues dealt with in the previous section, three issues of continuing importance for Turkey are:

### *i) Iranian nuclear proliferation*

It has not been easy being a neighbour of Iran's over the last 27 years, since the advent of the Islamic revolution. An eight-year war with Iraq and periods of violent and disruptive instability in the Persian Gulf waterway illustrates just how bad it has been. During this time, Turkey has worked hard to maintain stable and proper bilateral relations with Iran. At times, Ankara has shown forbearance towards Iran, such as the times when visiting Iranian dignitaries have snubbed Ataturk and his memory. At other times, especially during moments of heightened Islamist-Kemalist tension, Ankara has dealt with Iran more robustly. This included the conclusion of a military training agreement between Israel and Turkey in 1996, and the expulsion of the Iranian ambassador in 1997 for stirring up Islamist radicalism in Turkey.

The main contours of Turkish policy remain to try to manage threats from Iran without destabilizing the region, and to do so through diplomatic rather than military means. This can best be seen in relation to the widespread fears that Iran has an active programme for the acquisition of nuclear weapons under the guise of the development of a civilian nuclear energy sector. The general position of the Turkish state towards nuclear weapons as a whole is that regional proliferation is dangerous and undesirable, and that the goal should be a Middle East free of them. In terms of an active response to current fears, Turkey has backed the EU3, whereby France, Germany and the UK have sought to use diplomatic means to deflect Iran from its assumed ultimate goal of nuclear weapons status. For example, Turkey tried to persuade Iran to accept the incentive package on offer

from the UN Security Council before the expiry of the August 2006 deadline. It is likely that Ankara will continue to support the pursuit of a compromise outcome, which ensures that Iran does not end up with nuclear weapons status.

However, Ankara has only limited confidence in the ability of the leading lights of the international community to bring about such a goal. In the meantime, like a number of Arab states, notably Egypt, Turkey is not sitting on its hands as far as the nuclear issue is concerned. Ankara has dusted down its own plans for the acquisition of a civilian nuclear power capacity<sup>6</sup>, reflecting a broader international willingness to return to nuclear power as a sustainable alternative to other sources of energy that generate greenhouse gases. In spite of concerns that Turkey's vulnerability to earthquakes may make nuclear power additionally hazardous, there is every possibility that Turkey will be generating nuclear power within the next decade. Turkish strategists are now also debating how best to address the active possibility of an Iran with a nuclear weapons capability. The range of views stretch from a continuing reliance on alliance defence through the provision of the Nato nuclear umbrella, to a belief that Turkey can only be secure and sovereign if it has an independent nuclear weapons option of its own. That debate can be expected to intensify and crystallise over the next two or three years, depending on the outcome of the current engagement with Iran.

#### *ii) Turkish-Syrian Relations*

Relations with Syria have been one of the great successes of Turkish muscular diplomacy over the last decade. Ankara's thinly veiled threat to invade Syria in October 1998 over Damascus' active patronage of the Turkish Kurdish insurgency group, the PKK, resulted in a decisive success. Syria expelled the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, triggering a sequence of events that ended with his capture and repatriation some four months later. Since the stabilization of bilateral relations through the conclusion of the Adana Agreement in 1998, the relationship between the two countries has continued to improve, based on principles of mutual respect. Thus, the standoff brought to a satisfactory end a decade or more of exasperating diplomatic engagement, whereby the Syrians brushed aside Turkish attempts to negotiate the end of the PKK presence under Damascus' control.

Though the US has never liked the Syrian-Turkish rapprochement, and viewed it as unhelpful in its own strategy against one of the three "axis of evil" countries, Ankara's growing engagement with Syria, through high level visits and increasing commercial exchanges, was relatively uncontroversial until the assassination of the former Lebanese prime minister, Rafik Hariri, in February 2005. It is widely believed that Damascus was responsible for this brazen act. Both Syria's

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<sup>6</sup> Turkey announced in April 2006 that it would build a small pilot reactor near Sinop, on the Black Sea, with energy output scheduled for 2020. Turkey first seriously discussed adding a nuclear energy capacity to its energy sector in the 1960s. Three initiatives have been made, only to be shelved since then.

discomfort at the subsequent international investigation and its limited cooperation have done nothing to dispel the impression of culpability.

Turkey has struggled to maintain its engagement policy towards Syria, especially during the first 15 months after the slaying, when it appeared that Ankara was one of the very few world capitals willing to conduct business as usual. The Turks have unconvincingly insisted that their direct relationship with Syria has been helpful in trying to bring Hariri's killers to justice. Having worked so hard to transform relations with Syria, Turkey is clearly loathe to jeopardize the relationship: the Kemalist state for reasons of security; the post Islamist AKP for more complex, constructivist reasons of identity dynamics. While Ankara has sustained such a line hitherto, it will struggle to do so in the event of a more directly adversarial relationship between a US-Israeli axis and an Iranian-Syrian-Hizbollah alignment.

### *iii) The 34-day conflict in Lebanon*

During the Israeli military operation against Hizbollah in south Lebanon, Turkish public opinion focused increasingly on the disproportionality of the Israeli attacks, rather than the causes of the outbreak of the conflict. With the strength of public outrage rivaling anything seen in the Arab World, the AKP leadership felt increasingly obliged to take a rhetorical position against Israel. Speaking at an emergency OIC conference in Malaysia, for example, Erdogan warned that the Lebanon war had the potential to lead to a clash of civilizations. AKP parliamentarians weighed in with their own condemnations of Israel's conduct. Mehmet Elkatmis, a majority member of the Turkish parliament's Human Rights Commission, accused Israel of "waging state terrorism", and demanded that the international war tribunal put Israel on trial.

The Turkish discourse against Israel's actions in the conflict with Hizbollah also spilt over against Israel's principal allies, the US and the UK. This was based on the delaying tactics adopted by the two countries, especially at the UN, in the hope that more time would allow Israel to smash the military capacity of Hizbollah on the ground. Foreign minister Gul, for instance, warned that US inaction over Israel's attacks would harm efforts to promote democratic transition in the Middle East, another avowed aim of American foreign policy.

As the US relented, and the UN began to focus on the practicalities of bringing the conflict to an end, attention switched to the nature of the international force that would be assembled to hold the ring in southern Lebanon. Ankara's initial response to the idea was hesitant, especially in view of the fact that Turkey had been touted as a possible leader of such a force. Once it became clear that France would take the lead role, and that Italy would be a major contributor to the force, the Turkish position relaxed somewhat. Turkey seemed caught between two instinctive positions: contentment at being viewed as a Western state in the Mediterranean comparable with France and Italy; unease at the prospect of large

numbers of its troops being exposed in the killing zone of south Lebanon, especially without a clear mandate.

In the end, Turkey did contribute to the UNIFIL. It did so conditional upon the legitimacy of a UN resolution, provided by SCR 1710, together with the declaration and acceptance by the protagonists of a ceasefire. The latter made it clear that Ankara, state and government alike, was unwilling to take on any responsibility for the disarmament of Hizbollah; thus Israel failed to realize its objective of a robust peace-keeping force. The Foreign Ministry spin let it be known that Turkish troops were in Lebanon on a humanitarian mission. Turkey's cautious posture resulted in the commitment of nearly 1,000 servicemen to the force in Lebanon. Of this figure, however, the very substantial number of around 800 were to be based offshore, enforcing the naval blockade of south Lebanon. Of the 200 or so land forces sent by Turkey who were to be more in harm's way, the risk was lessened by their being deployed in a logistics role.

### *7. Not Yet a Spent Force? The Limits to AKP Reformism*

If the first half of the AKP administration was an exemplar of liberal reform, the second half has paled in comparison. In the early months of 2005 this looked to be a case of the mid-term blues. The energy that had been expended in the approach to the December 2004 EU summit, which took the momentous decision to commence accession negotiations 10 months later, helps to explain the subsequent trough. However, as time went on it became clear that rather than a blip, the marked slowdown in the reformist impetus would typify the second half of the AKP government rather than prove to be a brief exception. A ninth EU harmonization package promised in autumn 2006 was still awaited at the end of the year. In the end, the mid term dip has elided into the end-term electoral politics of 2007, when the opportunity for reform has narrowed, as the government retrenches in preparation for submitting itself for re-election.

If the momentum for liberal reform has dissipated after the first two years of the AKP in power, this can best be explained by two developments. First, the ECHR's confirmed decision not to recognize the wearing of headscarves in public spaces as an issue of fundamental human rights in Turkey. The pronouncement was a shock for the AKP. For its leadership, it suggested that the easy assumption that convergence with Europe would increase pluralism in Turkey and hence boost the prospects for the party's survival and success needed at very least to be taken less for granted. For the hard-line backbenchers in the AKP, with their Euro-conflation, it suggested that the party's embrace of the EU convergence strategy had been based on a false prospectus. For party backwoodsmen, the EU was as likely to indulge in double standards as invidious as any other Western institution.

The second development has been the changes at the top table within the EU, with the friends of Turkey and of Erdogan in particular dropping steadily, to be

replaced by an altogether more Turkey-sceptic generation of leaders. The defeat of George Papandreu in Greece began the rot, resulting in greater indulgence by Athens of the hard-line leadership in Nicosia. The fall of Erdogan's best friend, Silvio Berlusconi, who had even attended his son's wedding, resulted in the election of Romano Prodi, a person known for being lukewarm towards Turkey when previously heading the EU Commission. The electoral defeat of Chancellor Schroeder in Germany removed the man who had done so much to ensure that Turkey received candidate status from the EU in December 1999. His successor, Angela Merkel, was a well-known supporter of the "privileged partnership" approach to Turkey, that is to say a relationship falling short of full membership<sup>7</sup>. Though it was Erdogan's "friend" Tony Blair who flew to Turkey to soften the blow of the freezing of parts of the negotiating agenda with Ankara in December 2006, Blair was in an advanced state of terminal political decline at the time. In other words, as Turkey's relationship with the EU has cooled, those leadership figures who had proved to be so important in 2002, 2004 and 2005, and who might have steered the relationship in a more benign direction, were already largely absent.

With Erdogan's loss of allies inside the EU, compounded by the "enlargement fatigue" which has followed the "big bang" accession of the 10, and a markedly more hostile posture from a cluster of countries led by France, this sense that Turkey's EU moment is passing has grown in intensity at home. This has resonated with a long-standing and deep-seated suspicion on the part of much of the Turkish population, elite and mass alike, that for all its declarations the EU is not genuine about the prospect of Turkey's membership. They firmly believe that new obstacles will simply be erected over time to justify Ankara's continuing exclusion. This grim defeatism makes it easier to oppose calls from Brussels for new political reforms. Indeed, this has been the position of a motley band of EU opponents that have been increasingly vocal over the last 18 months in Turkey.

Though clearly a cause for concern, it is by no means the case that Turkey is friendless within the EU. While elected governments might be skeptical, it is the EU bureaucracy, the Commission itself, which has emerged as the mainstay of the actual accession process, especially since 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2005. In general, the Barroso cabinet, which is widely regarded as "pro-business", is seen as being good too for Turkey. It certainly contrasts favourably with most of its predecessors, the most egregiously anti-Turkish of which was that of Jacques Delors. Today's Enlargement D-G, led by Finnish Commissioner Olli Rehn, is widely respected within the relevant parts of the Turkish bureaucracy. Though Rehn is often heard to criticize the slow pace of recent change in Turkey, he is regarded as a man of integrity who makes such statements in good faith. Likewise, the "Turkey team" within the D-G, which is now more than 16 strong,

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<sup>7</sup> Beyond that, it is not very easy to say what a "privileged partnership" would look like, as the meaning of the term has been kept vague, intentionally so, one assumes.

is regarded positively in Ankara, a feeling, applied to the EU Secretariat-General (EUSG) and the appropriate parts of the Foreign Ministry, which is reciprocated.

While the broader political relations between Ankara and Brussels cooled during 2005 and 2006, the Enlargement D-G and the EUSG kept the technical talks going. With no big political decisions required between December 2004 and December 2006, this proved sufficient to keep momentum for convergence alive, even through the presidency of the arch Turco-skeptics, Austria, during the first half of 2006. Thus, the “screening process”, by which Turkish legislation was scrutinized for its compatibility with the *acquis*, was completed by autumn 2006. Furthermore, one of the 35 accession chapters was successfully closed in June 2006. Though that chapter, dealing with science and research, was admittedly one of the least controversial, its conclusion was of important symbolic value. It indicated that the process of convergence, though undoubtedly long and certainly painful, can achieve a successful outcome.

The success of the technical process was eclipsed by the run-up to the December 2006 summit and the predictable re-emergence of the Cyprus issue. The impasse related to the principle of access to Turkish ports and airports by the big bang 10, the Republic of Cyprus included. Ankara has denied Cypriot access for as long as Nicosia’s embargo on northern Cyprus remains in place. Even at the last minute in December, the AKP government, in the spirit of its 2004 flexible approach, offered a limited deal, whereby one port and airport would be opened on a trial basis. This proved to be insufficient to save the day. With Turkey having formally ceded the principle as part of the trade-off allowing it to commence its EU accession negotiations, punitive action against Turkey for infringing the accord was inevitable, though not unhelpful to the AKP’s looming electoral cause. The ports and airports issue was yet another example of the consequences of the internalization of the Cyprus problem for the EU. More broadly, it was an illustration of how the EU’s aggregation of parochialisms can trump overall geo-strategic interests, resulting in counter-productive outcomes.

#### *8. Conclusion: Turkey, the EU and the Middle East Beyond*

On the cusp of the 2007 “year of elections”, foreign policy in Turkey is likely to remain on management mode, if not automatic pilot, for the majority of the next 12 months. That means that relations with the EU will tick along; policy towards the volatile and unstable Middle East will be more reactive than innovative; regarding the US, much will depend on developments in and towards third countries, notably Iran and Iraq. Turkey will in any case have to await key electoral outcomes in other countries, notably the polls in Cyprus and France. Moreover, Turkey will be wary of the German presidency during the first half of 2007.

Beyond that, much will depend upon the outcome of the twin elections in Turkey. Three broad scenarios may be envisaged:

- One, a compromise between the AKP government and the Kemalist state over the symbolic but important post of president, together with a “hung” parliament following legislative elections, perhaps in the autumn, will offer the prospect of greater balance in decision-making, if less clarity and decisive leadership in policy
- Two, equally possible is a compromise over the presidency, together with a second clear electoral victory for the AKP. This is the “business as usual” scenario, with *cohabitation* to continue, and Erdogan and Gul remaining the likely key figures in driving foreign policy-making. A second term of the division of labour between the Kemalist state and a post-Islamist government will enable firmer judgments about the commitment or otherwise of the AKP to the foundations of a secular state
- Three the absence of a presidency compromise, with AKP taking over in Cankaya, will be a monumental political gamble; it would suggest that domestic political tensions will dominate the short to medium term, with focus and political will in the conduct of external relations a clear loser.

Assuming that the outcome of 2007 is not thoroughly destabilizing, Turkey should be able to look forward to a window of a good two years when political reform is once again feasible. There may even be an opportunity to settle the ports and airports issue (although this will in any case be less troublesome until the point at which Ankara needs to move ahead on all accession agenda items). Reform along these lines would help to reinvigorate the relationship with the EU, regardless of the new occupant of the Elysee Palace. While the US too would welcome more reforms in a liberal direction, the last months of the Bush administration are likely to wind down without any dramatic improvement in relations. The nature of ties beyond 2008 will depend on Bush’s successor and the prospects for Iraq.

Relations between Ankara and the various states of the Middle East are more difficult to judge, more as a function of the fluid regional dynamics. Even so, an Israel still in occupation of major parts of Palestinian lands will be hard even for the Turks to love. What is without doubt is that the states of the region will look to draw Turkey further into the affairs of the Middle East, regardless of the predisposition of Ankara. Whether this will be tempting for the AKP leadership or whether cautious Kemalist minds will prevail remains the greatest matter for future conjecture.