Diplomatically, Turkey has been part of the European state system since the 19th century when the Ottoman empire was included in the Concert of Europe. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1856, Europe’s great powers decided that the territorial integrity of the Ottoman empire was essential for European stability. Indeed, for much of the last half of the 19th century, European diplomacy was dominated by the “Eastern Question”—that is, how to manage the decline of the Ottoman empire, which by the mid-1800s had become, in Czar Nicholas I’s famous phrase, “the sick man of Europe.”

Yet although the Ottoman empire was part of the European state system, it was never regarded as an equal member of it. At its root, the Concert of Europe was an association of Christian, European, and “civilized” states governed by certain values and norms. Most European statesmen felt that the Ottoman empire did not share these values and norms. As Iver Neumann has noted, “Although ‘the Turk’ was part of the system of interstate relations, the topic of culture denied it equal status within the community of Europe.”

Turkey’s relations with Europe changed with the demise of the Ottoman empire. As the Ottoman empire lost its military superiority and fell behind European states in technological development, the Ottoman elite began to look to Europe as a model and began to import European ideas, lifestyles, and ways of thinking. In the words of one Turkish scholar, Europe became “a mirror through which the Ot-

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The “Europeanization” process thus became critical in defining Turkey’s development and evolution.

This process of modernization and Europeanization was accelerated in the early 20th century, especially after the formation of the Turkish Republic by Kemal Atatürk in 1923. Atatürk sought to modernize Turkey by eliminating almost all aspects of the Ottoman system, which he regarded as the main reason for Turkey’s cultural and technological backwardness. Beginning with the abolition of the Sultanate in 1923, and the Caliphate a year later, Atatürk introduced a series of reforms designed to transform Turkey into a modern, secular European state.

This process of gradual Europeanization was given new impetus after World War II by Turkey’s entry into NATO. Turkey was regarded as an important bulwark against the expansion of Soviet power and a critical link in the Western defense system. In 1963, Turkey concluded an Association Agreement (the Ankara Agreement) with the European Community (EC), which foresaw the possibility of eventual membership (Article 28) once the conditions for membership had been met.

At the same time, there has always been—and continues to be—a sense among many Europeans that Turkey is not really “European.” For centuries, “the Turk” was the significant “Other” against which Europe defined its identity. This perception of Turks as “other” in Europe is deeply embedded in Europeans’ collective memory and colors European views of Turkey today. Because of its different cultural and religious traditions, Turkey is seen as not quite really “European.” As one former European Union official has put it, “Turkey has never been fully considered a European country, but

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3 For a detailed discussion, see Bernard Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, especially pp. 234–293.

4 For a detailed exploration of this theme, see Neumann, Uses of the Other, Chapter Two.
neither is it considered fully Asian. It is at the crossroads between two continents, two cultures and two destinies."5

This ambiguity about Turkey’s place in Europe—its “European-ness”—has become more acute since the end of the Cold War. As long as the Soviet Union was perceived as a major threat, strategic considerations tended to dominate Turkey’s relationship to Europe. Although many Europeans had doubts about whether Turkey could ever become a member of the European Community—as the EU was then called—these doubts took a backseat to the overriding strategic need to bind Turkey close to the West.

The end of the Cold War, however, has raised new doubts about Turkey’s place in Europe and created new difficulties in Ankara’s relations with Europe. With the demise of the Soviet Union, military strategic considerations have become less important in Europe’s approach to Turkey, whereas economic, political, and cultural factors have increased in importance. Today Europe is not primarily concerned about deterring a Soviet (or Russian) threat but about creating a cohesive political and economic union and forging an effective common European foreign and defense policy. This shift in priorities has highlighted Turkey’s “distinctiveness” and raised new questions about where Turkey fits into the “new Europe.”

TURKEY AND EC ENLARGEMENT

Turkey’s problems with Europe—and the European Union in particular—have been accentuated by the EC’s (and later the EU’s) changing approach to enlargement.6 The Association Agreements which the EC signed with Greece in 1961 and Turkey in 1963 provided important trade benefits and were seen as possible stepping stones to full membership if and when the two countries fulfilled the concrete conditions for membership.


At the time of their conclusion, the Association Agreements were essentially limited to trade and financial matters. However, over the next several decades the EC’s goals and competence expanded significantly. First, Turkey’s economic development, which until the early 1980s relied heavily on an industrialization strategy based on import substitution, was in conflict with its commitment to economic integration with the EC through a customs union. This contradiction inhibited the development of Turkey’s relations with the EC.

In addition, Turkey’s protectionist strategy separated Turkey from the pattern of economic development in the rest of Europe, especially Southern Europe (Spain, Portugal, and Greece). Whereas the countries of Southern Europe experienced a rapid growth of imports and revenue from tourism, Turkey experienced no such boom. Thus, although Turkey’s relations with the EC in the 1970s were characterized by increasing tensions over the lack of progress toward the creation of a customs union, Greece, Spain, and Portugal succeeded in intensifying their efforts to integrate themselves into the European core.

The growing integration of the three Southern countries into the European core also led to an increasing “Europeanization” of their foreign policies—a process that gained greater impetus after their entry into the EC. This Europeanization process, however, did not occur in Turkey. Ankara continued to orient its policy more toward Washington than Brussels. Thus, although the economic and political aspects of Europeanness complemented one another in the case of Southern Europe, this did not happen in Turkey’s case. Turkey remained outside the process of Europeanization that increasingly characterized the economic and political evolution of the other South European countries.

Moreover, the Southern enlargement that resulted in the entry of Greece (1981), Spain (1986), and Portugal (1986) into the EC reflected an important shift in the EC’s approach to enlargement. In opening up its ranks to the three South European countries, the EC gave priority to political considerations—particularly the desire to

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7 Sevilay Elgün Kahraman, “Rethinking Turkey-European Union Relations in Light of Enlargement,” p. 3.
stabilize democracy in these countries—over economic concerns. It thus introduced additional criteria for membership for future members such as adherence to democratic principles, respect for human rights, and the rule of law. In effect, as Sevilay Elgün Kahraman has noted, the Southern enlargement resulted in “a reformulation of the external identity of the community.” Rather than being primarily an economic club of Northern industrialized countries, the EC came to represent shared norms, values, and codes of behavior among its members.

This shift in emphasis in EC policy went largely unnoticed in Turkey. Instead, Turkey continued to emphasize the economic aspects of membership, especially after the introduction of free-market reforms by Prime Minister Turgut Özal in the early 1980s. In 1987, Turkey applied for membership, despite being cautioned against doing so by the EC. However, unlike Greek Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis, Özal did not carefully prepare the groundwork for Turkey’s application, either at home or in Brussels.

Moreover, the timing was bad. The EC had only just begun the difficult process of digesting the Southern enlargement (Greece, Spain, and Portugal). In addition, the EC was on the verge of trying to develop a common internal market by 1992 and streamlining its decisionmaking processes. Thus, the EC was not ready to begin another round of enlargement, especially one involving membership of a large and less economically developed country like Turkey, which would entail significant financial burdens.

In December 1989 the EC rejected Turkey’s membership, citing a variety of economic, social, and political reasons. Instead, the EC proposed an intensification of relations based on the existing Associa-

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8Ibid., p. 5.

tion Agreement. In line with this, the EC Commission presented a comprehensive package of economic, trade and political measures—the so-called Matutes Package—designed to improve EC-Turkish relations. These measures were designed to relaunch EC-Turkish relations, which had largely languished after the military coup in Turkey in 1980.

THE IMPACT OF EASTERN ENLARGEMENT

Turkey’s bid for EC membership was further complicated by the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989–1990. This created a new dilemma for the EC: how to facilitate the “return to Europe” of the countries of Eastern Europe which had just emerged from 45 years of communist rule. Suddenly, Turkey found itself thrust to the back of the enlargement queue by the emergence of a large new group of candidates for membership—countries that only a few years earlier had been on the other side of the East-West divide. Although many of the East European countries were less advanced economically than Turkey, they were considered to be politically and culturally a part of Europe. Thus, the EC’s attempt to integrate the East European countries added a new “cultural dimension” to the EC’s policy that previously had been absent.

The Copenhagen summit in June 1993 was an important watershed in the evolution of the EU’s approach to enlargement. First, it acknowledged that membership of the East European and Baltic countries—but not Turkey—was a major objective of EU policy. Second, it set out specific economic and political criteria for membership. Among the latter were the requirement that a candidate achieve a stable democracy, maintain the rule of law, respect human rights, and protect the rights of minorities.

The Copenhagen criteria significantly complicated Turkey’s quest for EU membership. In effect, they raised the bar for membership by adding a whole new group of political criteria that had previously not been explicit criteria for membership. In so doing, they accentuated the difference between Turkey and the other aspirants and highlighted Turkey’s “distinctiveness.” Whereas Turkey’s economic

\textsuperscript{10}The European Community changed its name to the European Union in 1993.
The EU’s Luxembourge summit (December 1997) essentially ratified this process of differentiation. While underlining the gradual and all-inclusive nature of the enlargement process, it set up a two-tier accession process with the 11 East European and Baltic countries plus Cyprus. Turkey, however, was not accepted as a candidate country. Instead, a “pre-accession” strategy was set out for Turkey designed to help it to enhance its candidacy for membership.

In other words, Turkey was included in the enlargement process but not in the pre-accession strategy along with the other Central and East European countries (plus Cyprus). Instead, it was offered a special strategy to help it prepare for accession, but it was not given official candidate status nor offered a timetable for accession negotiations. The EU also linked Turkey’s eligibility as a candidate to progress on issues not contained in the Copenhagen criteria such as a resolution of Turkey’s differences with Greece over the Aegean and a Cyprus settlement.

The EU’s failure to include Turkey on the list of candidate countries provoked a wave of outrage in Turkey and prompted Turkey to freeze its political dialogue with the EU. Many Turks believed—and continue to believe—that the EU’s rejection of Turkey’s candidacy was unfair and reflected an inherent bias against Turkey on cultural and religious grounds because it is a Muslim country. Although such concerns are not entirely absent from European thinking, this view overlooks the EU’s evolution in the last decade and the hardening of accession criteria, particularly the growing importance of political criteria for membership. It is this evolution and greater emphasis on political criteria more than anything else that has complicated Turkey’s efforts to achieve EU membership.

THE HELSINKI SUMMIT

The Luxembourg summit represented a nadir in Turkey’s relations with the EU. In the aftermath of the summit, Turkish-EU relations sharply deteriorated and Turkey downgraded its relations with Brussels. Indeed, in the wake of the summit, it was common to hear
voices in Ankara and Istanbul saying that Turkey’s relations with Europe were not all that important and that Turkey needed to diversify its ties. However, at the Helsinki summit (December 1999), the EU reversed its previous stand and accepted Turkey as a candidate member “on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate states.”11 Turkey was also offered a pre-accession strategy designed to stimulate and support its reforms.12

The shift in the EU’s position was due to several factors: (1) a desire on the part of the EU to halt the deterioration of Turkish-EU relations after Luxembourg, (2) a more accommodating position by the new SPD/Green coalition in Germany, (3) a change in Greek policy toward Turkey, and (4) pressure from the United States. However, the EU made clear that it was not prepared to open accession negotiations with Turkey until Ankara had fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria. It also linked Turkey’s eventual membership to a resolution of its dispute with Greece over the Aegean and a settlement of the Cyprus issue.13

At its summit in Nice (December 4–6, 2000), the EU Council approved an Accession Partnership Document for Turkey. The Accession Partnership (AP) is the centerpiece of the pre-accession strategy for Turkey. It identifies short- and medium-term priorities, intermediate objectives, and aspects on which Turkey’s accession preparations must concentrate for Turkey to qualify for membership. It

13 Some Turkish analysts have suggested that the reason why the EU accepted Turkey’s candidacy at the Helsinki summit was related to the geopolitical and security risks that might arise if Turkey were excluded. (See, in particular, Meltem Müftüler-Bac, “Turkey’s Role in the EU’s Security and Foreign Policies,” Security Dialogue, Vol. 31, No. 4, December 2000, pp. 489–502.) However, there is little evidence to support this view. On the contrary, the Helsinki decision appears to have been based on a combination of economic, political, and social considerations. Security concerns played practically no role. For good discussion, see Gareth Jenkins, “Turkey and EU Security: Camouflage or Criterion for Candidacy?” Security Dialogue, Vol. 32, No. 2, June 2001, pp. 269–272.
also sets up monitoring mechanisms to evaluate progress toward achieving the objectives and priorities set out in the Accession Partnership Document. In effect, the Accession Partnership Document establishes a “roadmap” for Turkish accession to the EU. Whether—or when—Turkey joins the EU depends critically on Turkey’s ability to realize the objectives set out in the Accession Partnership Document.

The National Program of Action presented by the Turkish government in March 2001 was supposed to spell out how Ankara intended to meet the objectives laid out in the Accession Partnership Document. The program was an impressive declaration of intentions, but it was vague and evasive on precisely those issues—the treatment of minorities, the role of the military, Cyprus, and relations with Greece—regarded by the EU as the most critical areas where changes are needed.14

Since then, Turkey has taken a number of steps to address EU concerns. In October 2001, the Turkish parliament passed a series of reforms that significantly eased restrictions on human rights.15 These reforms range from reducing police powers of detention to easing the investigation of legislators suspected of corruption and other crimes. The reforms also paved the way for lifting the ban on Kurdish language broadcasts and increased civilian representation on the National Security Council. In addition, in February 2002, the parliament passed a mini-reform package containing reforms in the Turkish Penal Code and antiterrorism law that relaxed constraints on freedom of expression that had been used to jail journalists and intellectuals who published views considered to undermine the State.

These reforms have been welcomed by the EU. However, the Progress Report released by the EU in October 2002 makes clear that Turkey still has a way to go to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria,

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especially in the political field.\textsuperscript{16} In addition, Ankara must overcome a number of other obstacles—including resolving its differences with Greece over the Aegean and Cyprus—before membership in the EU can seriously be considered.

THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The most important obstacles to Turkey’s EU membership are political, but there are important economic obstacles to membership as well. One is simply the huge size of the country. With a population of nearly 67.8 million, Turkey is the second largest country in Europe behind Germany. If its population continues to grow at the current rate, Turkey could have the largest population in Europe by the middle of the 21st century. Integrating a country the size of Turkey—especially one that is also characterized by great regional disparities—will pose an enormous challenge to the EU.

The reforms introduced by Prime Minister Özal in the early 1980s essentially abandoned the import substitution strategy that had previously been the cornerstone of Turkish economic policy. Since then, Turkey’s economy has become more open and the private sector has expanded significantly. Currently, more than half of Turkey’s foreign trade is with the EU. Moreover, the structure of Turkey’s trade with the EU has significantly changed. In the 1970s, Turkey was an exporter of agricultural produce and raw materials. Today, the bulk of Turkey’s exports are manufactured goods.

Despite these changes, the Turkish economy is still characterized by a number of structural weaknesses that inhibit Turkey’s integration into the EU:

- **Low Per Capita Income.** Income levels in Turkey are significantly below those in Western Europe. Per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is about $3,000. This is well below that of the poorest countries in Europe. Greece and Portugal, for instance, have per capita incomes of $11,770 and $10,600, respectively.

• **A Large Agricultural Work Force.** Nearly 40 percent of Turkey’s population is engaged in agriculture (compared with 2 percent in Britain). This rural work force amounts to about 15 million people—a number larger than the total population of several current EU members and five times larger than the population of some prospective new members such as Slovenia and Estonia. Shifting this population out of agriculture into modern forms of economic activity will require an enormous and prolonged structural adjustment.

• **Large Regional Disparities.** Although areas of Istanbul and Ankara enjoy standards of living and levels of prosperity close to those of Western Europe, Central and Eastern Anatolia are largely agricultural and have a much lower standard of living. With the winding down of the PKK insurgency, however, the Turkish government has begun to encourage greater private investment in Southeast Anatolia.

• **High Inflation.** Turkey’s inflation over the last decade has been nearly 80 percent per annum—much higher than the average in the EU. This has had a negative effect on the financial sector and is one reason for Turkey’s low foreign investment. Lower inflation would not only increase foreign investment but could also help to boost Turkey’s growth rates.

• **Low Foreign Investment.** Turkey has a very low rate of foreign investment. In the period 1993–1997, foreign investment averaged about 0.5 percent of Gross National Product (GNP). By contrast, during the same period Spain, Greece, and Portugal managed to attract foreign investment of between 1 and 2 percent of GNP. The low rate of foreign investment is due largely to macro-economic instability and regulatory deficiencies. But other factors such as cumbersome bureaucratic practices and the persistent high inflation rate have also played a role in inhibiting foreign investment.

• **A High Public Sector Deficit.** Turkey’s public sector deficit is extremely high—35–45 percent of the GNP. This is one factor responsible for Turkey’s high inflation. This high inflation rate is compounded by structural weaknesses in the financial sector that make it difficult for Turkish banks to compete with their counterparts in the EU.
• **Slow Pace of Privatization.** Turkey has undertaken a major effort at privatizing state-owned enterprises since the early 1980s. However, the pace of privatization has been sluggish and hampered by the fact that not all of the necessary legislation has been passed. In addition, a lack of transparency in decisionmaking has resulted in large-scale fraud, bribery, and corruption.

In short, Turkey faces major problems of structural adjustment before it is ready for membership in the EU. This is true, above all, in the agricultural sector, which, as noted above, still accounts for 40 percent of the workforce. The creation of the customs union, which came into force at the end of 1995, should help reduce many of these structured obstacles. The customs union is designed to abolish tariffs on imports. It initially resulted in a worsening of Turkey’s balance of trade with the EU, but over the longer term it will create a more liberalized economic climate and should help Turkey to integrate into the global market.

At the same time, the economic crisis of 2000–2002 has underscored the need to proceed more rapidly with a program of structural reforms. Reforms are required in three areas in particular: agriculture, energy, and privatization. Reform in these areas will help to restore investor confidence—badly shaken by the economic crisis—and help reduce corruption by increasing transparency. It will also enhance Turkey’s prospects for EU membership over the long term.

**DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

The main obstacles to Turkey’s EU membership, however, are in the field of democratization and human rights. Recent EU evaluations of Turkey’s prospects for membership have consistently pointed to shortcomings in Turkey’s human rights record. Although Turkey has taken some steps to address these shortcomings, progress has been slow and insufficient. Moreover, many of the changes in legislation have not been implemented.

One of the most sensitive issues is the use of torture in Turkey. At the Luxembourg summit in December 1997, Luxembourg Prime Minister

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17 Ibid.
Jean-Claude Juncker called attention to this issue by bluntly stating that torturers could not sit at the EU table. Juncker’s remarks caused uproar in Turkey—in part because of the undiplomatic manner in which they were expressed. They nonetheless highlight the need for Turkey to address the torture issue more adequately if it is to achieve its goal of EU membership.

Two points, however, need emphasis in this connection. First, although there continue to be deficiencies in Turkey’s record regarding the use of torture, these lapses are largely a result of poor implementation of the laws and regulations on the books, not the result of a state policy that condones torture. Second, in the last several years Turkey has undertaken a number of efforts to tighten the laws against torture. However, the fact remains that incidents of torture continue to occur. Thus, Turkey needs to take further steps to ensure that the laws and regulations against the use of torture are fully implemented if it expects to gain membership in the EU.

The EU has also expressed concern about restrictions on freedom of expression, especially those contained in Articles 159 and 312 of the Turkish Penal Code and paragraphs 7 and 8 of the Turkish Anti-Terrorism Law. In February 2002, after intense debate, the Turkish parliament passed legislation amending these laws. However, the EU has claimed that these changes do not go far enough to meet the Copenhagen criteria.

In an effort to further enhance Turkey’s qualifications for EU membership, in August 2002 the Turkish parliament passed a major reform package that inter alia abolished the death penalty except in times of war. The legislation removed an important obstacle to EU membership. However, it is not likely to be enough to persuade the

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18 The European Committee Against Torture published three reports in 1992, 1996, and 1999 in which it noted that torture was systematically practiced in Turkey. The most recent report, published in February 1999, noted that the situation was improving but stated that torture still occurs in Turkey and that, despite the improved rules and regulations forbidding torture, the implementation of the rules and regulations was not satisfactory, especially in police stations and prisons. See Toward Calmer Waters: A Report on Relations Between Turkey and the European Union, The Hague: Advisory Council on International Affairs, July 1999, p. 28.

EU to open accession negotiations at the EU Copenhagen summit in December 2002.

THE KURDISH ISSUE

A related problem is posed by Turkey’s approach to minority rights, especially for the Kurdish population. Kurds comprise between 8 and 12 million people out of Turkey’s total population of nearly 67.8 million. Less than half the Kurdish population is in Southeast Anatolia; the majority is in the major Turkish cities, particularly Istanbul and Ankara. Another eight million or so Kurds live in the Kurdish regions of Iraq, Iran and Syria.

Turkey does not recognize a Kurdish minority and views Kurds simply as citizens of Turkey—in short, Turks. This is a legacy of the strong assimilationist policies pursued by Atatürk at the time of the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The Ottoman empire was organized along religious community lines. Thus, the Kurds—unlike the Greeks, Jews, and Christian Armenians—were not considered a minority but were full members of the Muslim majority. Atatürk was determined to create a new Turkish nation-state on the basis of a specifically “Turkish” national identity. As a result, all existing Muslim minorities, including the Kurds, were “granted a kind of Turkishness.”20 The only minorities that were recognized were those recognized in the Lausanne Treaty (1923)—Jews, Armenians, and Greeks.

Atatürk’s concept of Turkish identity was highly inclusive. Every person living within the borders of the Turkish Republic and accepting its basic principles could become a Turkish citizen. But becoming a Turk required the suppression of an individual’s ethnic identity. In short, Atatürk’s concept was extremely generous in that it allowed anyone to become a Turkish citizen. But as Svante Cornell has pointed out, it did not provide a solution to those who were not pre-

20 Dogu Ergil, “Identity Crisis and Political Instability in Turkey,” The Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 54, No. 1, Fall 2000, p. 51. However, by forcing all Muslims into a Turkish identity, the new regime also closely associated Turkish identity with Islam, which was contrary to its secularization policy.
pared to abandon their previous ethnic identity.\textsuperscript{21} This was the case for a large portion of the Kurdish population.

The Turkish approach to the Kurdish issue is also animated by deep-seated historical memories regarding threats to the integrity of the Ottoman empire at the end of the 19th century and reflects a long-standing belief, sparked in particular by the Sèvres Treaty (1920), that the West favors the dismemberment of the Turkish state and the creation of an independent Kurdish state.\textsuperscript{22} As a result, Turkey has strongly rejected demands by the Kurds for greater regional autonomy and cultural rights, such as the right to receive public education in their own language, fearing that this could spark separatist pressures and threats to the integrity of the Turkish state.

The winding down of the campaign against the PKK has removed an important point of tension in Turkey’s relations with the EU. At the same time, it has focused greater attention on Turkey’s internal policies and made it harder to justify some of the restrictions on personal expression and human rights. These restrictions were justified in the past on the grounds that Turkey faced a serious terrorist and separatist threat. But now that the threat from the PKK has significantly diminished, the case for keeping these restrictions in place is much less compelling.

The diminution of the armed violence by the PKK provides an opportunity for the Turkish government to press forward with reforms in the field of democratization and human rights. The government has recently undertaken measures to encourage investment in the Kurdish-populated areas of Southeastern Anatolia, one of the poorest regions in Turkey. In August 2002, in an effort to encourage the EU to open accession negotiations, the Turkish parliament also passed legislation legalizing broadcasting and private tutoring in


\textsuperscript{22}Under the Sèvres Treaty, the Western powers decided to dismantle the Ottoman empire and agreed to the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. Although the treaty was never implemented, the memory of the treaty has had a strong effect on Turkey’s national consciousness and psyche.
Kurdish. However, teaching Kurdish in public schools is still forbidden.  

These moves remove important obstacles to EU membership. But they are unlikely to be enough to persuade the EU to open accession negotiations at the EU summit in Copenhagen. The best Turkey can probably hope for at the summit is a vague reference to the EU’s willingness to open accession negotiations when Turkey has fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria.

THE ISLAMIC FACTOR

Turkey’s application for EU membership also raises important cultural and “civilizational” issues. Although the EU insists that Turkey’s application for membership will be judged solely on the Copenhagen criteria, beneath the surface many Europeans question the degree to which Turkey’s Islamic religious and cultural traditions are compatible with “European” values. As former Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo stated in early 1997: “There is a problem of a large Muslim state. Do we want that in Europe? It is an unspoken question.”

Over the past several decades, there has been a visible increase in the role of Islam in Turkish social and political life. This has been reflected, in particular, in the strong support for the Islamic Refah (Welfare) Party and its successor, the Fazilet (Virtue) Party. It has become fashionable lately among Western observers to talk about a process of “re-Islamization” in Turkey. However, such a view is misleading. Islam was never really eliminated in Turkey. It was simply removed from state institutions. It continued, however, to exert a strong influence in the countryside. The result was a sharp division between the Kemalist secular culture of the military-bureaucratic elite centered in Ankara and other major cities in Western Turkey and the traditional Islamic culture that prevailed in the villages and towns of Eastern Anatolia.

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Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, Islam gradually began to make a comeback in Turkey. This was in part a product of the democratization of Turkish political life, which gave new space to all kinds of political groups, including the Islamists. Ironically, in the 1980s it was also promoted by the military, who saw Islam as a bulwark against the infiltration of Marxist and leftist ideas and made religious instruction in schools compulsory. Both General Kenan Evren, who became president after the return to civilian rule in 1983, and Prime Minister Turgut Özal repeatedly stressed the importance of religious values in Turkish nationalism. Özal even performed the hajj—the holy pilgrimage to Mecca—during a trip to Saudi Arabia.

Broader economic and social changes, particularly increasing urbanization, also contributed to strengthening the role of Islam in Turkish political and social life. As more and more Turkish peasants flocked to the cities, they brought with them their rural values, including their strong Islamic traditions. Uprooted from familiar surroundings and often forced to live in shanty towns (gecekondu) on the outskirts of major cities, this disaffected and impoverished stratum of Turkish society has been one of the strongest sources of political support for the religious parties. In effect, Islam has become “the oppositional identity for the excluded sectors of Turkish society.”

The Islamists have also benefited from the failure of the mainstream political parties to address Turkey’s growing social and economic problems. This has allowed the Islamists to portray themselves as the party of clean, efficient government, especially at the local level. Indeed, many of those who voted for Refah in the 1995 national elections—in which Refah won more votes (21 percent) than any other political party—did so out of disillusionment with the...

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26M. Hakan Yavuz, “Cleansing Islam from the Public Sphere,” The Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 54, No. 1, Fall 2000, p. 22.

27Refah’s record for clean, efficient government at the local level was a major factor in its strong showing in the December 1995 elections. However, its policies also had a less-publicized dark side, including mounting debt in many municipalities. See Ugur Akinci, “The Welfare Party’s Municipal Track Record: Evaluating Islamist Activism in Turkey,” The Middle East Journal, Vol. 53, No. 1, Winter 1999, pp. 75–94.
mainstream parties and as a form of protest rather than out of religious conviction.

At the same time, the Islamist movement has undergone an important evolution in recent years. All major Islamic groups have become more “pro-European.” Once firm opponents of Turkey’s membership in the EU, the Islamists today are one of the strongest supporters of Turkish membership, which they see as an important guarantee of their religious and political rights. In addition, the crackdown on Islamic influences since the ouster of the Erbakan government in mid 1997—the so-called “February 28 Process”—has prompted a rethinking of attitudes toward modernity and democracy within the Islamic movement and the now banned Virtue (Fazilet) Party. In the last few years, a group of younger, pragmatic “modern Islamists” has increasingly challenged the antimodern, dogmatic policies of former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan and tried to steer the Islamist movement in a more democratic direction.

The decision by the Constitutional Court in June 2001 to ban the Virtue Party has accelerated the transformation of the Islamic movement and resulted in the emergence of a more democratic and forward-looking Islamist Party—the Justice and Development Party (AKP)—one that could be easier to integrate into Turkish political life. Polls show that the AKP is likely to get more than 20 percent of the vote in the November 2002 elections. Thus, it is quite possible that the AKP could be part of a government that emerges from the elections. Whether the Turkish military would be willing to accept such an outcome or would initiate a campaign to undermine an AKP-led government, as it did in the case of the Erbakan government, remains to be seen.

28 However, the conservative wing of the Islamist movement, led by Erbakan, has been less favorably disposed toward EU membership since the decision by the Turkish Constitutional Court in June 2001 to ban the Virtue Party.

29 For a detailed discussion, see Chapter Two.

CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY

Turkey’s aspirations for EU membership will also require an important change in the role of the military in Turkish political life. In the postwar period, the Turkish military has acted as custodian of the Kemalist legacy. The military sees its mission as not only to defend the territorial integrity of the Turkish state against external threats but also to protect it against internal challenges.

Ironically, as the Islamists have sought to modernize and move further away from fundamentalism, the military has become more doctrinaire and dogmatic in its interpretation of Kemalism. Although outwardly strong supporters of Turkey’s membership in the EU, many officers fear that the reforms required for EU membership will weaken the ability of the Turkish state to manage its security problems—a view shared by the right-wing MHP. Initially, the military opposed any significant relaxation of restrictions on freedom of expression in the Constitution and Penal Code, including easing the ban on broadcasts in Kurdish, arguing that the lifting of these restrictions would pose a threat to the integrity of the Turkish state. However, they have recently taken a more flexible approach to broadcasting in Kurdish and abolition of the death penalty.

The military’s special role is codified through its dominance of the NSC. Legally, the NSC has only an advisory function. In reality, however, NSC pronouncements are tantamount to official edicts—as former Prime Minister Erbakan was forced to recognize when he sought to treat the NSC’s “recommendation” to clamp down on the rising influence of Islamist forces in Turkey as only “advice.” His failure to take forceful action against the Islamists lead to his eventual ouster in a “silent coup” in June 1997.

In response to EU pressure, the Turkish parliament passed legislation in October 2001 calling for an increase in the number of civilians on the NSC. However, this is largely a cosmetic measure. The

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The influence of the military on many security issues remains strong. Membership in the EU will require a reduction of the military’s influence in Turkish politics. Whether the military will be willing to accept such a lower profile remains to be seen.

GREECE AND CYPRUS

Turkey’s differences with Greece over the Aegean and Cyprus—discussed in detail in Chapter Five—also are an important factor affecting Ankara’s overall relationship with the EU. Since mid-1999, relations between Turkey and Greece have improved significantly. However, this détente has been limited to relatively non-controversial areas. The core differences over the Aegean and Cyprus have not been resolved.

At the same time, a resolution of the Aegean and Cyprus issues has become increasingly linked to Turkey’s quest for EU membership. In accepting Turkey as an official candidate for membership at the Helsinki summit, the EU Council urged candidate states to make every effort to resolve their border disputes and other related issues or, failing that, to bring the dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in a “reasonable” time. The council stated that it would review the situation at the end of 2004 in relation to the accession process. Thus, if there is no progress toward resolving the Aegean dispute by 2004, the EU could refuse to open accession negotiations with Turkey.

At Helsinki, the EU also agreed that a Cyprus settlement would not be a precondition for Greek Cypriot membership in the EU—a position it reaffirmed in its Strategy Paper issued on November 13, 2001. However, it also noted that in reviewing the situation it would take into consideration “all relevant factors.” The EU expects to conclude accession negotiations with Nicosia in late 2002. There are few economic obstacles to Nicosia’s membership. Thus, in principle, the Greek part of the island could become a member of the EU by 2004–2005.

Greek Cypriot membership would be traumatic for Turkey and would open up the prospect that Greek Cyprus could veto Turkish membership in the EU or demand certain concessions regarding Cyprus as a condition for lifting its veto. A decision by the EU to ac-
cept Greek Cyprus before a Cyprus settlement could provoke a crisis in Turkish-EU relations much more profound than the sharp down-turn in relations with the EU after the Luxembourg summit. Turkey could respond by integrating the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) more closely with the Turkish mainland or by freezing relations with the EU. However, Turkey is unlikely to abandon the goal of membership entirely.

THE DEFENSE AND SECURITY DIMENSION

Turkey’s relations with Europe have also been complicated by differences over defense and security policy. Unlike other Southern European members of NATO, Turkey has not witnessed a strong “Europeanization” of its foreign policy. This has tended to highlight Turkey’s “distinctiveness” and set it apart from the rest of the southern region in NATO.

The development within the EU of an increasingly important security and defense policy (ESDP) has reinforced this distinctiveness and created a new set of problems. Although other Southern European countries have avidly embraced the EU’s development of a stronger security and defense component, Turkey’s attitude has been much more ambivalent. Since Turkey is not a member of the EU—and not likely to be one for quite a while—Ankara does not want to see any significant weakening of NATO’s role in European security, since this would reduce Turkey’s own voice on European security matters.

Turkey is not directly opposed to the expansion of the EU’s role in security and defense matters, but Ankara has sought assurances that it will be involved in the planning and decisionmaking in EU crisis management operations, especially those that touch directly on its own security interests, and has refused to agree that the EU can draw “automatically” on NATO assets to manage a crisis in which NATO decides not to become involved. Instead, it has insisted that the EU’s access to these assets be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Turkey’s demands for closer consultation and involvement in EU decisionmaking in EU crisis management operations have hindered the coordination of crisis management planning between NATO and
Ankara's objections have been driven by two main concerns. First, Turkey feared that Greece might use its membership in the EU to push the EU to intervene in areas—particularly Cyprus—that directly affect Turkey's security. Second, most of the crises that the EU or NATO might face in the future are likely to be on or near Turkey's periphery. Thus, Turkey wanted to assure that it would be involved in decisions that directly affected its security.

In early December 2001 Turkey accepted an American/British-sponsored compromise proposal—the "Ankara Document." The Ankara Document provided assurances that the EU’s ESDP would not be used against other NATO allies (i.e., Turkey). In addition, it guaranteed that Turkey would be closely consulted in the case of an intervention by the EU’s Rapid Reaction Corps in any contingency in the geographic vicinity of Turkey or that affected Turkish security interests. The Ankara Document thus met Turkey’s two main concerns. However, at the EU summit in Laeken, Belgium, a few days later, Greece raised objections to aspects of the Ankara compromise and forestalled its implementation, claiming that the Ankara text would, in effect, give Turkey a veto over Greek national interests such as Cyprus and the Aegean and leave these areas outside the competence of the EU’s ESDP. Such a situation is regarded as unacceptable by Athens.

Eventually a compromise is likely to be found that will allow NATO and the EU to coordinate their cooperational plans for crisis management. However, the dispute has served to deepen mistrust between Ankara and Brussels. Many Turks see the dispute as further proof of the EU’s desire to exclude Turkey from important decisions affecting its security while Turkish intransigence and brinkmanship on this issue have irritated many EU officials and made them less

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inclined to show flexibility on other issues related to Turkey’s EU membership.

Turkey has taken a rather cautious approach to NATO’s transformation since the end of the Cold War. Ankara initially had reservations about the first round of NATO enlargement, fearing that it would antagonize Russia. However, it has strongly supported the inclusion of Bulgaria and Romania in a second round on the grounds that this would help stabilize the Balkans. At the same time, because Turkey faces a serious threat from Iraq and Syria, Ankara is particularly concerned that NATO’s new emphasis on crisis management does not lead to a weakening of the Alliance’s commitment to collective defense.

NATO’s transformation in the wake of the September 11 attacks could increase Turkey’s strategic weight within the Alliance. In the future, NATO is likely to show greater concern for threats beyond Europe’s borders. In such a more outward-looking Alliance, Turkey’s position on the periphery of the Middle East could enhance Turkey’s strategic importance—but also its exposure.\(^3^5\)

At the same time, Turkey’s greater involvement in Middle Eastern affairs since the end of the Cold War creates new dilemmas for Ankara. Many European allies are reluctant to broaden NATO’s scope of action beyond Europe and might balk at aiding Turkey if it gets into a conflict with Iraq or Syria, especially if Turkey were perceived to have provoked the conflict.\(^3^6\) However, a failure to come to Turkey’s aid in such a case would create a crisis in Turkey’s relations with NATO and might even prompt Turkey to withdraw from the Alliance.

\(^3^5\)The events of September 11 have provoked a debate in Turkey about the effect of the terrorist acts on Turkey’s strategic position. For a skeptical view, see Saban Karidas, “The strategic importance of Turkey after September 11,” *Turkish Daily News*, May 29, 2002.

\(^3^6\)Germany’s hesitant response to Turkey’s request for Allied Mobile Force Reinforcements during the Gulf crisis highlights this problem. To many Germans, deterring a possible attack by Iraq against Turkey was not what NATO was all about. To many Turks, on the other hand, Germany’s ambivalent response called into question the validity of Article V (collective defense) of the Washington treaty and raised broader doubts about the utility of NATO membership. See Ian O. Lesser, *Bridge or Barrier: Turkey and the West After the Cold War*, pp. 14–15.
This issue could become more acute if the United States launches an attack against Iraq. Turkey has expressed reservations about such an attack, which would increase Ankara’s own exposure, especially if it allowed the United States to use its facilities to conduct strikes against Iraq. However, most Turks believe that Turkey will have little choice but to support the United States if Washington eventually decides to attack Iraq.

Turkey’s proximity to the Middle East also gives it a special interest in counter-proliferation and ballistic missile defense. Turkey is the only NATO member that currently faces a threat from ballistic missiles launched from the Middle East (although the threat to other Southern European countries will increase over the next decade). Thus, as the ballistic missile threat intensifies and the United States proceeds with the construction of its missile defense system, Turkey is likely to show increased interest in developing a regional missile defense architecture in cooperation with the United States and Israel and possibly even India.

THE AMERICAN FACTOR

The events of September 11 are also likely to have an important effect on Turkey’s relationship with the United States—and indirectly the EU. Turkey has always seen a strong tie to Washington as an important component of its security. The United States, in turn, has been one of Turkey’s strongest allies and has been more supportive than many EU members of key Turkish priorities such as the construction of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, the campaign against PKK terrorism, and Turkey’s quest for EU membership.

The United States has strongly supported Turkey’s candidacy for EU membership, largely for strategic reasons. In the past, U.S. “lobbying” for Turkey’s candidacy often was a source of friction in U.S.-European relations. However, with the Helsinki decision, the

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United States essentially achieved its main objective—to ensure that Turkey was accepted as a genuine candidate for EU membership—and tensions between the United States and its European allies over Turkey largely subsided, especially since it was evident that Turkey still had a long way to go before it would actually be ready to join the EU.

The events of September 11, however, have served to strengthen the U.S.-Turkish strategic partnership and could cast the issue of Turkey’s membership in the EU in a new light. Washington sees Ankara as a critical ally in the war against terrorism. Thus, for strategic reasons it may be more inclined in the future to side with Turkey in disputes with the EU. This, in turn, could lead to the re-emergence of the tensions that characterized U.S.-EU relations in the period leading up to Helsinki.

THE DIFFICULT PATH AHEAD

Turkey today stands at a historic crossroads. The Helsinki summit has opened the possibility of EU membership. But membership will require extensive changes in the Kemalist system that has evolved over the last 78 years, especially the reduction in the role of the military in guiding and directing Turkey’s political evolution. It will also require the Turkish elite to accept a greater degree of political and social pluralism as well as unprecedented limits on state sovereignty. These changes are bound to provoke resistance from forces that have a strong vested stake in the maintenance of the current system. But they cannot be avoided if Turkey hopes to become a full member of the EU.

The reform package adopted by the Turkish parliament on August 3, 2002, goes a long way to meeting many of the Copenhagen criteria, especially regarding the abolition of the death penalty and Kurdish broadcasting and education. The ball is now in the EU’s court. But the EU is likely to want to see how well the laws are actually imple-

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mented before it is willing to set a date for opening accession negotiations.

The victory by the Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the November 3, 2002, parliamentary elections is likely to reinforce this caution. Although the AKP supports Turkey’s entry into the EU—in large part because it sees EU membership as a constraint on any possible crackdown on its existence by the military—the EU is likely to want to see how the AKP performs in office before setting a date for opening accession negotiations.

Developments within the EU will also have an effect on Turkey’s aspirations for membership.

Developments within the EU will also be important. A slowdown in the EU integration process could negatively affect Turkey and diminish its chances for membership over the long run. In many parts of Europe, support for EU enlargement has been declining, as the costs of enlargement have become clearer. The strong showing by the far right in elections in Austria, Italy, France, Denmark, and Holland could strengthen this trend and complicate Turkish aspirations for membership. A failure by the EU to offer Turkey a date for opening accession negotiations—or at least a clear perspective for opening negotiations—at its summit in Copenhagen in December 2002 could also dim Turkish aspirations and provoke a strong domestic backlash in Turkey similar to the one that occurred in 1997 after the Luxembourg summit.