

Workshop Report : Quo Vadis Turkey? Turkey's European and Foreign Policy Today

Berlin – Schwanenwerder, September 3 - 4, 2009

Background of the workshop (letter of invitation to the workshop by FES Turkey)

The May 2009 nomination of Ahmet Davutoğlu as Foreign Minister of the Republic of Turkey, part of a larger cabinet reshuffle, strongly accentuated the multidimensional focus of Turkey's current foreign policy approach. The architect of Turkey's 'zero problems' foreign policy concept, Davutoğlu, having spent the past several years as advisor to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and behind-the-scenes mediator for the Turkish government, has now moved onto the centre stage.

Davutoğlu's nomination goes hand in hand with Turkey's rising self-confidence as a regional player. Thanks to its economic development and socio-political transformation, as well as rising awareness of its geostrategic importance, Turkey has begun to play a greater role in policy areas such as energy and security. Its appointment as a non-permanent member to the UN Security Council in November 2008 and its one month presidency of the UNSC in June 2009 have boosted Turkey's position in international bodies and at the global level. In the spring of 2009, during his first bilateral visit outside the Americas, US President Barack Obama hailed Turkey as an independent player in its neighbourhood and on the world stage.

Turkey's first application to the European Community dates back to 1959. Forty years later Turkey was granted EU candidate status. In 2005, after an impressive phase of reforms, the EU opened accession negotiations with Ankara. Big expectations – on both sides – have not been met in the following three and a half years, however. In Turkey, massive domestic controversies have hindered further reforms. EU opponents of Turkey's entry, meanwhile, have stepped up their rhetoric. 2009 has been called a "make it or break it year" for the accession process. The developments in the coming months will be closely followed in and outside Turkey.

Against this backdrop questions such as the following arise:

- What is to be expected from the nomination of Ahmet Davutoğlu? What are the likely implications for Turkey's foreign policy orientation? Will Turkish foreign policy strike a new balance between its "eastern" and "western" orientation?
- How do we assess Turkey's increasing weight in the region and at the international level? What role will Turkey play in the Caucasus, the Middle East and beyond? How will Turkey's approach affect the balance of power in the region (Russia, China, Iran, etc.) in the long run?
- How does Turkey's new foreign policy approach affect the EU accession process? Where do the interests of Turkey, Germany and the EU overlap? Where do they differ? How will German-Turkish relations develop against this backdrop?



Workshop Programme

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Discussion on keynote speech delivered by
Heinz Kramer, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin

What's new in Turkish domestic and foreign policy under the AKP government?

The workshop participants, foreign policy experts from Turkey, German and various other countries such as Poland, Spain, Sweden, etc. intensely discussed the views presented by Heinz Kramer. Initially, the debate circled around question whether the AKP has established a genuinely new foreign policy. Many of the participants felt the conceptual framework developed by Ahmet Davutoğlu in his days as an academic has shaped Turkey's current policies to a significant extent. However, other factors, including domestic and global developments, influencing Turkish foreign policy, have been taken into consideration. Besides discussing the AKP government's foreign policy, participants also addressed Turkish-EU relations during the introductory part of the workshop. These comments do not appear in this section, but in the summary of the discussion in Panel III, under "Prospects for EU-Turkish Relations".

Characteristics and ideological framework of Turkish foreign policy

According to Heinz Kramer, five principles – all of them echoing Davutoğlu's ideas – govern the AKP's conduct of foreign policy:

- (1) providing a balance between democracy and security
- (2) conducting a 'zero problems' policy vis-à-vis Turkey's neighbours
- (3) developing relations with neighbours and beyond
- (4) adhering to multidimensional policies
- (5) implementing 'rhythmic diplomacy'

These days, media and academics apply various labels to describe Turkish foreign policy. Terms such as 'multidimensional', 'soft power', 'Neo-ottomanism', and 'strategic depth' are used to describe current foreign policy approaches. The adequacy of some of these terms and the underlying concepts were challenged by workshop participants.

Most participants agreed that 'strategic depth' – which takes its name from the title of Davutoğlu's 2001 book – is a concept that justifies a more diversified and more active policy. Individual participants pointed to a resemblance with the foreign policy approach of Turgut Özal, focussing on a combination of activism and greater reliance on Turkey's historical and cultural heritage. 'Strategic depth' was also criticised from an intellectual perspective as a concept that cannot be further developed. Unless Turkey begins to prioritize among the various foreign policy issues at hand, ideas like 'strategic depth' and 'rhythmic diplomacy' are likely to prove fallible. Though Turkey has so far managed to reconcile the various strands of its foreign policy, future developments might produce a lack of balance of priorities in its multidimensional approach.

The domestic framework of Turkish foreign policy

Domestic developments are an important factor in Turkish foreign policy, participants agreed. Understanding recent developments in the area of foreign policy is impossible without recognising that successive AKP governments have embarked on a fundamental re-framing of the domestic and political landscape. The enormous scale of the pre-2005 EU reform effort; the rising polarization between the AKP and the opposition since 2005; and the – by some presumed - loss of the military's influence in Turkish politics, made evident during the ongoing Ergenekon investigation: all of these are domestic developments that have left a visible mark on the AKP government's foreign policy.

The discussion then focused on the extent to which Turkey has developed into a democratic and liberal society under the AKP government. Some Turkish participants underlined that – despite continuing shortcomings - political freedoms and the freedom of expression are more extensive today than they have ever been. Others felt the progress is limited and quoted studies that show only minor changes in Turkey's international ranking as a democratic and liberal country. The perceived change in political culture, they argue, has not yet reached all levels of Turkish society.

According to some participants, Turkey needs to tackle several major problems to continue on the path of democratization. First, it needs to abandon the notion of excessive nationalism. Second, it must put into practice the military's subordination to a democratically elected government. And third, it needs to reduce the state elite's adherence to an antiquated Westphalian vision of the state. Not all the participants agreed. The approach of EU members such as France, they argued, shows that the values of a Westphalian nation-state are not necessarily incompatible with EU membership.

Economic and outside factors influencing Turkish foreign policy

Turkey's economic development and impressive growth over the past decade is an important factor in its foreign policy. The country's successful integration into the global economy has helped triple per capita income – to over US\$ 9,000 – between 2002 and 2007. Increased prosperity has also boosted the popularity and electoral success of the AKP.

The change in Turkey's economic and political position would have been impossible without the end of the Cold War. It was in Turkey's neighbourhood where the effects of the Soviet Union's disintegration became particularly visible. As the Iron Curtain fell, new partners in trade and politics emerged, contributing to Turkey's rise as an economic player and a regional power.

Positive results of Turkey's foreign policy

Although questions remain as to the future development of Turkish foreign policy, its achievements to date are visible in at least three areas. The 'zero problems' policy – the best known element of Davutoğlu's strategy – is a resounding success. Although problems persist in regard to Cyprus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Kirkuk issue, the threat of war between Turkey and one of its neighbours, a real possibility in the 1990s, has now been eliminated. Relations with Greece and Northern Iraq might not be completely free of tension, but they are based on close cooperation. During the past few years Turkey's image in the region has improved significantly – although, as some participants pointed out, this may have to do more with a new political style rather than with tangible results. Overall, today's Turkey seems to subscribe to the idea of mutual understanding and cooperation, being less inclined to engage in zero-sum games and power politics.

Panel I: Turkey's Role in the Middle East and the Muslim World – Developments, Implications and Prospects

The discussion during the first panel focused on Turkey's role in the Middle East. Participants agreed that Turkey's interests and its involvement in the region have rapidly increased in recent years. Although this development owes considerably to the AKP government and to Ahmet Davutoğlu's intellectual contribution to Turkish foreign policy, some participants argued, it actually precedes the AKP's rise to power. Differences of opinion emerged as to the nature of Turkey's involvement in the Middle East and its perception in the West. The future course of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East – and the question of which normative or geo-political principles, if any, should govern it – proved to be the most contentious issue in the discussion.

Characteristics of Turkey's foreign policy and role in the Middle East

There was a general feeling among participants that Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East bears the mark of continuity. The AKP's Middle East agenda, therefore, is not assessed as innovative as it might appear to some. While domestic developments to some extent explain the changes in Turkish policy in the Middle East, regional and global shifts have also played a highly significant role. A few participants argued that Davutoğlu has been able to present Turkey's Middle East policy as innovative by communicating his concepts efficiently.

Among the Turkish discussants Turkey's increased role in the Middle East was viewed as a "correction of a Cold War anomaly". The end of the Cold War, they argued, has enabled Turkey to re-establish its historical ties with the countries of the region. Other participants explained Turkey's growing role in the Middle East as a matter of adaptation and necessity – owing to changes in the region – and as a factor of its

transformation into a 'trading state'. The number and nature of wars in the Middle East over the past few decades has had a particular bearing on Turkey's desire to contribute actively to regional stability. Turkey's active role in the global economy has also created the need to establish close economic relations with regional partners. As one participant pointed out, Turkey's neighbourhood is no longer predominantly an area of instability, but of trade opportunities.

Several participants criticised the notion, often voiced in the West, that Turkey is to serve as a model for the Middle East. Significant differences exist between Turkey and the states of the Middle East, they argued, especially given Turkey's development since the foundation of the Republic and its 'alienation' from the Arab world. Turkey continues being perceived by observers in the Middle East as an outsider and, as a result, has no ability to serve as model for democratization and development in the region. Supporters of the Turkish development model are also to be found in the region, however.

As participants pointed out, Turkey's positive role in the Middle East does not relate to being a role model but to its role as a mediator in various conflicts. What makes Turkey's mediating role possible is its ability to maintain relations with more states and factions in the region – including Israel, Iran and Hamas – than any other international actor. Moreover, though it remains a Western ally, Turkey no longer is perceived in the Arab World as an "American puppet".

Turkey's role as mediator can also be viewed critically. Since Turkey is increasingly becoming the mediator of choice for regional players – and since it seldom turns down mediation offers – the resources of its Foreign Ministry are being overstretched. What's more, some participants stressed, Turkey's increasing presence in the Middle East is being viewed by its EU and NATO partners as a shift away from the West. Occasionally, it is even perceived as a new path in development and a U-turn for Turkish democracy. Turkish participants in particular rejected this view, arguing that Turkey's focus on the Middle East is a necessary policy opening and implies no loss of interest in partnership with the West. The West should appreciate Turkey's renewed activity in the region, they argued, since it is itself incapable of playing a similar role.

The question of whether current Turkish foreign policy can be described as 'neo-Ottoman' was another source of debate. Participants agreed that strands of neo-Ottomanism existed in Turkish foreign policy long before the first AKP government and referred to the policies of Turgut Özal (and – to some extent - of İsmail Cem). By some standards, Turkey's increased involvement in the Middle East can be traced back even to the 1960s. Likewise, the idea of de-securitization – the change from a focus on hard security threats to a focus on developing productive and mutually beneficial relations – began to inform Turkish policy before the rise of the AKP.

Turkey-US relations and the Middle East

To understand Turkey's role in the Middle East, the regional role of the United States has to be taken into account. Today, some participants argued, no important decision can be taken in the Middle East without Turkey's input. The United States' overstretch and the imminent danger of failure in Afghanistan and Iraq contribute to Turkey's involvement in two ways. First, the region's instability plays to Turkey's desire to help stabilize its neighbourhood. Second, the US, its capacities and resources pushed to the limit, has welcomed a Turkish role in the Middle East. Despite the fact that its policies are now more than ever driven by self interest, Turkey's relationship with the US – particularly under the Obama administration – is dominated by cooperation instead of discord.

Turkey's policies on northern Iraq and the Kurdish question are also evolving in sync with the United States. The November 2008 agreement (on taking action against the PKK) between Turkey, the regional government of northern Iraq and the US was made possible due to several developments. In Turkey, the military has lost its predominant position in the debate on the Kurdish question, finally enabling a free and transparent discussion on subject. In northern Iraq, the administration of the Kurdish Autonomous Region has grown increasingly interested in establishing close relations with Turkey – particularly with a view to the pending American withdrawal from Iraq and the Kurds' growing economic dependence on their northern neighbour. In Washington, meanwhile, the value of Turkish cooperation with the US and the Iraqi Kurds has been duly noted.

One fact that is often overlooked in the debate on Turkey's strategic orientation is that it is the former pro-Atlanticist secular elites who now indulge in the harshest anti-Western rhetoric. Although the ruling party has an Islamist pedigree and consists to a large degree of pious Muslims whose upbringing has led them to perceive Westerners as enemies, this attitude has changed since the first AKP government. Refusal to cooperate with Western partners on ideological grounds alone can no longer be observed. The Turkish government's initial openness for US-American plans to open a northern front in the 2003 invasion of Iraq is a case in point: after all, it was the Turkish parliament which refused to back these plans. As it were, Turkey's unplanned and unexpected refusal to participate in the war in Iraq helped stimulate its further involvement in the Middle East.

Turkey-EU relations and the Middle East

Many discussants underlined a connection between Turkey's growing role in the Middle East and its objective to become a member of the EU. Some, however, questioned whether Turkey's EU ambitions have had a direct impact on its Middle East policy. A solution to the Armenian question, they argued, might have no great relevance with regard to Turkey's chances to become an EU member. Rather, Turkey's efforts to solve problems with its neighbours are driven by self-interest and the desire

for a more stable and secure environment.

From Ankara's perspective, the EU must develop a coherent position on the issue of Turkish EU-accession. In doing so, it must address its own aspirations to become a foreign policy actor, particularly in view of its inability to forge a coherent policy in the Middle East. Unlike the EU, a self-confident Turkey is capable of conveying European positions towards Middle Eastern countries without appearing to patronize. This is increasing its attractiveness to the EU.

Overall, however, the EU seems not to have yet recognized how far Turkey's role has changed. Though its geographic location is an important asset, Turkey's most important contribution to a partnership with Europe is its identity – as a Muslim country, a Western ally and an economic power. This is why, as some participants saw it, the EU can accomplish little by sidelining Turkey through initiatives such as the Mediterranean Union.

Taking into account Turkey's role in the Middle East, as well as other developments, the question arises whether the Turkish accession process is headed for rupture or stagnation. Western Europe is no longer the motor for economic development in Turkey. Furthermore, some participants argued, Turkey has developed so far that democratization and social liberalization can come from within. An important example of this is the Ergenekon case, which – flawed as it may be in some respects – is proof of the military's reduced standing in Turkish politics and society. According to the participants, however, all this is not to say that Turkey's accession process should stop. The EU is still an important factor in developing Turkey into a bona fide democracy.

Normative aspects of Turkey's Middle East policy

Discussing the different dimensions of Turkey's role in the Middle East, participants examined the values that govern Turkish policies and the long-term vision that informs Turkish strategy. Some felt Davutoğlu's strategies and concepts have little normative value. Among German participants the lack of a Turkish vision for a prospective order in its neighbourhood, be it the Middle East or the Caucasus was lamented. Turkish policymakers, they complained, have also failed to address issues like the role of nuclear weapons in the region.

Some participants responded that expectations towards Davutoğlu and his ministry should not be unreasonably inflated. As for imposing a blueprint for a particular order in the region, this would violate Turkey highly valued doctrine of non-interference. It must be pointed out, finally, that Turkey is encouraging the Muslim world to adhere to common values such as human rights. In the summer of 2009 Davutoğlu spoke of women's rights and democratization as prerequisites for social and economic development in Muslim countries.

Turkey's foreign policy, according to other panellists, does not lack normative values but is instead influenced by the ideas of Realpolitik e.g. as promoted by Egon Bahr. In this sense, Turkey's policies can be compared to German-Russian relations, with normative considerations having to give way to pragmatic ones. The Turkish response to the presidential elections in Iran is the most recent example of a policy whereby maintaining good relations with a neighbouring country is prized above human rights, democratization and freedom of speech.

**Panel II:
Turkey's Role in the Black Sea Region and Beyond:
Developments, Implications and Prospects**

Though Turkey started to engage in the Black Sea region in the 1990s – in parallel with the EU – initiatives in this area of policy had already been launched under Özal and Demirel. Turkish and European interests have always been guided by the notion that the Black Sea region constitutes a gateway to the Caspian Sea and Central Asia. Over the course of their debate on Turkey's relations with Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the EU, participants also took stock of the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform and regional energy politics.

Turkish politics in the Black Sea region

The success of Davutoğlu's strategy is evident in the Black Sea region. By supplying Turkey with a regional vocation, Davutoğlu has effectively freed Turkey from the need to form alliances or join specific blocs. Translated into a 'zero problems' policy, such a strategy has significant appeal, not only because of the marketing efforts invested in it, but because of its simplicity.

Many participants agreed that Turkish policy in the Black Sea region has changed drastically over the last years. Participants agreed that Turkey has managed to resolve most disputes with its neighbours, putting an end to a period of self-imposed isolation. As some pointed out, Davutoğlu's new strategy has turned Atatürk's motto of "Peace at home, peace in the world" on its head, making regional peace the precondition for domestic stability. The goals of today's proactive initiatives, some critical voices warned, are sometimes so ambitious as to produce inconsistencies in policy.

Participants cited a number of reasons for Turkey's intensified interest in the Black Sea region. One is its embrace of the notion of regional ownership; another is regional instability, which makes Turkish engagement in the Black Sea a matter of necessity.

Turkey-Russia relations

Turkey's rapprochement with Russia can be traced back to the 1970s, when Ankara began to forge links with the Soviet Union. Current relations are further consolidated

by civilian actors, mostly businessmen. The Russian market is of key importance for the Turkish economy, while around 2.5 million Russian tourists visit Turkey every year. Taking stock of Western criticism and suspicion of Turkey's rapprochement with Russia, participants pointed out that Turkey – just like the EU – must learn to balance its economic interests with a principled refusal to grant Russia an exclusive sphere of influence in the former Soviet space.

Turkey's relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan

A break-through in Turkish-Armenian relations currently seems realistic. Looking back, however, similar situations – in 2001 and the beginning of 2009 – have not led to a sustainable improvement in relations. Participants emphasized that there are clear reasons why the Black Sea region in general, and the conflict with Armenia in particular, was not a major issue during the first years of the AKP government. Members of the first cabinets lacked experience in international politics; the focus on opening accession talks with the EU, meanwhile, as well as the fallout from the war in Iraq, limited the Turkish administration's capacity to engage in other regional arenas.

A solution of the Turkish-Armenian dispute is currently possible, some discussants believed, also because of a shift in Russia's position: Moscow's behaviour, overtly pro-Armenian in the past, has become more rational and constructive. There's also the international backdrop. Just as war in the Balkans helped spur Turkey's rapprochement with Greece, 'hot' conflict in the South Caucasus – the August 2008 war in Georgia – has speeded its rapprochement with Armenia.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict continues to be a major obstacle en route to Turkish-Armenian normalization, indexing the rapprochement process to Armenia's – and Turkey's – relations with Azerbaijan. Such interdependence, according to some participants, is proof of Turkey's importance for stability in the South Caucasus.

In its policies vis-à-vis Armenia and Azerbaijan, a few panellists argued, Turkey must bear in mind that one country – Azerbaijan – not only shares with it certain cultural and religious characteristics, but is also economically stronger and more populous than the other. The difficulties inherent in such a situation, as well as Baku's rejection of a Turkish contribution to a resolution of the Karabakh conflict, show the limitations of the zero problems policy in the South Caucasus.

The Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform

The most discussed Turkish initiative regarding the Black Sea region is the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP) created during the Georgian-Russian War in August 2008. A Turkish response to a war in which Ankara was not able to take sides, the Platform showed that Turkey took the idea of regional ownership very seriously.

Considering the tension in Armenian-Turkish relations, Armenia's early support for the Turkish CSCP was remarkable. It demonstrated, at the same time, Armenia's interest – in contrast to Georgia's and Azerbaijan's – in impeding conflicts between neighbouring states in the region.

The lack of Western or European representation in the Platform, and possible Turkish motives for launching the initiative in the first place, became the subject of a lively discussion. Perhaps, suggested some participants, it was to balance Russia's power – by including it in the Platform – that Turkey went ahead with the project. If that were in fact the case, the panellists agreed, it would have been an overly ambitious move.

Some discussants complained that potential European partners were not even consulted before the Platform's creation – this, despite the fact that European-supported mechanisms such as the OSCE Minsk Process were already in place. Since the Minsk Process had produced no results so far, others objected, the Platform is actually a good idea. The exclusion of the Western powers, meanwhile, as well as the fact that Turkey is genuinely acting in its own interest, might in fact be the source of the Platform's future success. A few participants pointed out that one of the Platform's flaws is its non-inclusion of Abkhazia and South Ossetia: this, however, owes to the highly disputed issue of the two Georgian regions' international recognition.

The EU, Turkey and the Black Sea region

Various speakers focused on the EU's influence on Turkey's policies in the Black Sea region. The lack of a credible EU strategy for the region, they reasoned, explains not only Turkey's increased engagement but also its reluctance to coordinate its policies with Europe. Whether or not additional Black Sea states become EU members, they added, will not change Turkey's being an integral part of the region.

Opinions diverged on the issue of Turkey's increased adherence to the idea of regional ownership, including its leading role in projects uncoordinated with its Western allies. Given its unique geostrategic position, several participants argued, Turkey's increasing presence in its neighbourhood is a welcome development – Europe should greet Ankara's new policies with support, therefore, not paranoia. As Turkish participants underlined, a proactive Turkey is more likely to become a member of the EU.

Energy politics

The EU's strategy for the Black Sea region is premised on a single interest: energy supplies. Oil and gas, of course, also informs Turkey's approach towards the region. Taking stock of the feasibility of the various energy and pipeline projects now under way, several participants complained that too many pipelines have been planned for an unknown amount of resources. Surprisingly, some of the governments and corporations involved do not appear to realize the ephemeral nature of their plans. Other panellists believed the pipeline projects to be viable, though they acknowledged

the need to modify transit routes and secure agreements with suppliers. For pipelines running through Turkey, potential supplier states include Egypt, Iraq and Turkmenistan. The widespread location of these states might prove problematic.

Though participants agreed that the Turkish government should support the Nabucco pipeline, the project itself, they pointed out, might run into a number of obstacles. For Turkey, the issue of re-export rights among the transit countries, as well as Russia's position, might prove problematic. Recent developments in the energy field, however, show that Russia is a Turkish partner – and that, particularly since the Nabucco deal, it is interested in sustaining this partnership.

Panel III: Prospects for EU-Turkish Relations

In the introductory part of the panel, participants acknowledged that between 2002 and 2005 the AKP government implemented a series of impressive reforms to realize the opening of accession talks with the EU. In doing so, it has achieved more for Turkey's relations with the EU than any of its predecessors. The reason why the government ceased to implement reforms after 2005, participants admitted, remains a puzzle. Some blamed the growing opposition against the AKP from Turkey's secular elites and the military, which sometimes took on the form of coup plans. Others blamed a perceptible cooling in the EU's attitude towards Turkey, spearheaded by new leaders like Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy. In their discussion, the panellists focused on the ups and downs in EU-Turkish relations under the two AKP governments. Finally, they addressed the feasibility and advisability of alternatives to EU membership for Turkey.

EU policies of the AKP

According to a Turkish participant, the post-2004 slowdown with regard to reforms has recently seen new activism. In the last months, between end of 2008 and fall of 2009 several developments took place: a new national framework for EU-accession process has been formulated, a cabinet reshuffle took place, a Kurdish language state television channel was implemented, laws on the prosecution of military members before civilian courts were passed and the re-opening of Halki seminary is again on the agenda.

As participants see it, the EU's declaration that negotiations with Turkey are to be open-ended – combined with the fact that no other candidate country has faced similar challenges – has become the source of the EU's loss of credibility in Turkey. It has also become the biggest impediment to further reforms. As long as Turkey has reason to believe that full membership is not on the table, it is unlikely to adopt EU laws in cost-intensive areas like environment and public procurement. Participants were careful to point out, on that note, that – as much as Merkel and Sarkozy might embrace the 'open-ended' approach – the Negotiation Framework with Turkey

names membership as the final goal of negotiations.

Davutoğlu's ideas have left a visible mark on Turkey's EU policies. In the view of some participants it is largely due to his influence that EU membership is no longer an overriding national interest, now regarded simply as one among several foreign policy options. Such a shift, several speakers pointed out, has led to estrangement and criticism from the EU. In both Europe and America, Turkey has come under fire for its relations with Hamas and the Sudanese government, its response to the cartoon crisis, as well as its position on Rasmussen's nomination as Secretary General of NATO and Ahmadinejad's re-election in Iran. Other participants argued strongly, the AKP government – despite some shifts in policy – continues to see Turkey's future in the EU.

The EU's approach towards Turkey

With pro-Turkey countries, beginning with Sweden, at the helm of the next five EU presidencies, the climate for a potential improvement in EU-Turkish relations is favourable. One obstacle is Sarkozy's France, which has taken to blocking several chapters of the accession talks (on the grounds that these lead to full membership). Such tactics, according to some German participants, are a violation of the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*. Regrettably, there has been little opposition towards France – a united pro-Turkey front has not appeared among the EU member states. Gone is the time when a French-German 'engine' in the EU would sustain support for Turkey's accession. Whatever the results of the German elections in September, the EU's position towards Turkey is not likely to evolve in the short term.

Challenges and alternatives to EU accession

According to some speakers, Turkey's perception of the EU does not take into account the realities of a post-enlargement Europe: the AKP government has failed to tap into the Central and East European members' support for Turkish EU accession.

It is a misperception, some argued, that Turkey needs to become a regional power to join the EU – in fact, this would decrease its desire and its chances of becoming a member. Any alternatives to EU membership, meanwhile, are likely to deliver negative outcomes. A Turkey left out of the EU will be likely to revert to the conditions of the 1990s, when authoritarian and military solutions ruled the day. For the EU, the implications of shutting the door in Turkey's face would also be negative: Europe's adaptation to the 21st century and its development into a multicultural society would have failed.

The shortcomings of today's Custom Union point to the difficulties inherent in concluding a 'privileged partnership' between Turkey and the EU. In order to make a privileged partnership seem like an attractive option, the EU would have to offer Turkey a visa facilitation regime (such as the one now extended to the Balkan

countries), full participation in Free Trade Agreements concluded with third countries. It would also have to address Turkish concerns regarding the economic isolation of Northern Cyprus.

Low public support for Turkey's membership in many European countries is a major concern, all participants agreed. Given the extent of negative or distorted perceptions, a referendum on Turkey's accession to the EU would fail in many countries, Germany included. Bearing this in mind, the Turkish government would be wise to implement specific measures to address its image problem in Europe.

Conclusion

Given the range of global and domestic developments that had their origin long before the first AKP government – as well as the influence of politicians like Turgut Özal, Süleyman Demirel and İsmail Cem – the impact of Davutoğlu's concepts on Turkish politics should not be exaggerated. That being said, the policies introduced and inspired by Davutoğlu under successive AKP governments have indeed had a significant influence on Turkish foreign and European policy. Under Davutoğlu's watch, visible changes and developments have taken place. Turkey has begun to engage with the Muslim world and the Black Sea region. Tensions with neighbouring states have been drastically reduced. The overall approach to dispute settlement has been de-militarized. Finally, Turkey has developed into a mediator in various regional disputes, earning acclaim from Eastern and Western partners alike. According to many speakers, none of this implies a loss of interest in close cooperation and integration with the West.

Criticism and doubt was voiced in regard to several aspects of Turkey's new foreign policy. Unless it begins prioritizing among its tasks and regional engagements, Turkey is in danger of overstraining itself, some participants warned. The country simply lacks the capacity to remain active on so many fronts: the Turkish government's assessment of its standing vis-à-vis large powers like the United States and Russia is unrealistic. Several participants pointed to the lack of a coherent normative dimension to Turkey's foreign policy as another of its shortcomings. Turkey, they argued, needs to place a higher premium on supporting human rights and civil liberties, as well as on articulating its vision of a regional order. The lack of normative values, argued others, is in fact an asset for Turkish policy. It is its adherence to the principle of non-interference, after all, which enables Turkey to cooperate with a wide range of actors, including Iran, Israel and Hamas.

The issue of Turkey's EU accession was a common denominator in all discussions held during the Workshop. There is a close connection, participants agreed, between Turkey's foreign policy and its EU membership perspective. While some argued that Turkey's embrace of regional ownership could improve its chances of joining the EU – this, by enabling Europe to forge coherent and effective policies in the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Black Sea – others claimed the contrary. Turkey's emergence as

a regional power, they said, would render its EU ambitions obsolete as no additional gains would come from membership.

Turkish participants underlined the need for Turkey to continue the EU accession process. The membership perspective, they noted, is the best way for their country to develop into a bona fide democracy. Whether or not a new reformist era is taking root in Turkey, they acknowledged, support for Turkish membership among European countries and governments is decreasing. Possible alternatives to EU membership, however, including the idea of a 'privileged partnership', are likely to experience the same shortcomings as today's Custom Union.

Following the last panel, participants proposed several topics that could be the focus of subsequent discussions on Turkish foreign policy. These included the question of compatibility between Turkish and European foreign policies; the notion of European identity and its impact on Turkish-EU relations; and the current state of civil society in Turkey, including its role in foreign policy.

Turkey's European and foreign policy is of significance not only for the fate of the country itself but for the future of the EU, including long-time partners of Turkey such as Germany. Regardless of the range of opinions on the nature of recent developments, the link between Turkey's behaviour as a foreign policy actor and developments in Europe and beyond is evident.

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