

## A YEAR ON UNCHARTED WATERS

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If the vile attacks of September 11 were a turning point in international relations, then the past year was one where the keystones of a new order were put in place. The year's agenda was almost entirely consumed by the American will to go to war against Iraq, the war itself and its consequences. The unfolding of the process whereby the United States ultimately ended up attacking Iraq along with Britain caused great strains in transatlantic relations, hitherto the mainstay of international order. It divided the European Union, enraged the Arab and Muslim countries and led to the most massive anti-war protest mobilization around the world in decades.

The intellectual and doctrinal background of the war was associated with neo-conservatives within and without the administration. Yet it was also evident that on the main tenets of what American strategic thinking should be, a broad consensus was also shaping in Washington. Based on that consensus terrorism and rogue states seeking weapons of mass destruction were identified as the main threats to American security and the Middle East has replaced Europe as the main theatre of geopolitics. Finally, as was stated in President Bush's security doctrine there is agreement that the United States must remain the world's predominant military power. The main differences concerned the style of doing things and whether or not any attention had to be paid to existing international institutions and norms.

IN its quest to unseat Iraq's dictator and start a profound transformation of the Middle East by making a showcase of Iraq the Bush administration stretched transatlantic relations to the limit. Faced with the unrelenting opposition of France, Germany and Russia, the USA and the UK ended up waging the war without a second UN resolution that explicitly allowed the use of force to make Iraq comply with previous UN resolutions. In the process the American Secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld attacked Germany and France and made its oft-quoted distinction between 'new' and 'old' Europe. The countries of the 'new' Europe did include older members of the EU as well. But what drew most attention was the fact that the entirety of Eastern and Central European countries supported the US position, at times blatantly defying the Franco-German camp. Some commentators, notably in France, suggested that by not joining forces with the US-led coalition against Iraq, France and Germany helped the world avoid the appearance of a clash of civilizations.

Despite the fact that there was no conclusive evidence of the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, which eight months after the war could

still not be produced, and against popular opposition throughout the world the war started on March 20. Within three weeks and after little resistance American and British forces conquered Iraq and Saddam Hussein and the leading figures of his regime just evaporated. As the year drew to a close though the ace of spades of the famous deck of playing cards the Americans prepared, that is, Saddam Hussein was caught alone, disheveled, in a hole near a hut where he was reportedly staying. He thus joined over forty other figures of the regime apprehended earlier and would await trial. It was not clear as the Almanac went to press whether or not the former dictator would be tried by an Iraqi court or by a special international court similar to the one in The Hague which tried Slobodan Milosevic.

The war against Iraq had exposed deep divisions within the European Union. Both the Transatlantic crisis and these divisions led the Union to take its common foreign and security policy needs more seriously. By July, Javier Solana, the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, had prepared the first draft of the EU's own security strategy document. The document set the EU's concept of preventive engagement against the American doctrine of preemption at its core and was adopted at the end of the year in the Brussels summit. Again in Brussels, with the grudging approval of the United States, the EU took the first major steps to form its own rapid reaction force based on an Anglo-French-German agreement to set up an EU "planning cell" with a skeleton staff but promised to use the planning facilities of NATO.

Actually the real challenge of the year for the EU was the drafting of its constitution. The debate over the final draft of the constitution led at times to acrimonious debate and to a serious soul searching particularly over the issue of including Christianity as a source of European identity. Ultimately, the efforts to finalize the constitution by the end of the year failed as the negotiations collapsed after bitter meetings during the Brussels summit. Spain and Poland took the lead in opposing France and Germany's drive to change the voting system because they objected to any change in the Nice agreement of December 2000. That agreement gave them greater relative weight in voting, therefore veto opportunities, than their populations warranted. Although many commentators saw this failure that came on top of the deep divisions within the Union concerning the War in Iraq as a crisis so severe that it could break the EU, others were more sanguine.

As these and other tumultuous developments were taking place on the global scene Turkey itself was undergoing a profoundly consequential experiment. ON the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the secular Turkish Republic, the Justice and Development Party that won the elections in November 2002, rooted in Turkey's Islamist politics but representing a generational as well as an ideological shift in that movement, took the country into uncharted waters in pursuit of EU membership.

## **Jumping into stormy waters, untested**

The first Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-AKP) government took office at the end of November last year. At first some thought that the AKP won a victory that may have been too crashing for its own good. In its speedy ascent to power it did not have enough time to consolidate itself as a party or to formulate the party's ideology and policies. It was a coalition of diverse forces rather than a coherent political apparatus. It also faced the problem of a duality of power. Because Mr. Tayyip Erdoğan, the party leader was not allowed to take part in elections and therefore was not a Member of Parliament, he could not be Prime Minister. Mr. Abdullah Gül, who is a powerful figure in his own right, assumed the post only to hand it to Mr. Erdoğan when the latter became a Member of Parliament after a repeat election in the Eastern province of Siirt in early March.

Yet, the AKP proved to be a quick study, pragmatic and decisive. Mr. Gül, as Prime Minister, has earned the respect of the country with the way he handled the Iraq crisis and his transparent conduct of policy. He also kept remarkably cool when faced with the scathing attacks against his government by the Higher Education Council and the Military. Once the AKP formed the government, the judiciary and the Higher Education Council had taken it upon themselves to play the role of the guardians of secularism and bombarded the public with dire warnings of an Islamist future. Unfortunately for them, they have drawn more ridicule and ire from the public than concern and support.

The military issued its first warning to the government by the Chief of the General Staff at the beginning of January. In a brief speech he gave at a reception for journalists, General Hilmi Özkök identified some red lines. He attacked the government on its policies over Cyprus and the EU drew attention to the national security concerns that he believed both issues raised. But as expected his most forceful words were reserved for the threat of Islamic rule and the safeguarding of secularism. He was responding particularly to a dissenting opinion the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense gave about the administrative retirement without appeal of officers suspected of being involved in "reactionary activities". Interestingly, the Chief of Staff's expected remarks failed to draw much support from established opinion makers. Such confrontational postures continued during the year and mostly originated from other members of the military high brass. The crescendo came during August when retiring service chiefs expressed their concerns about the future of secularism, the speed and direction of the EU reform process and the like. Ultimately the overwhelming support of Turkish society for the EU goal drowned most of the objections that were voiced by different circles against the reforms or particular aspects of these.

On the economic front the government at first appeared to have wasted the golden opportunity the markets offered it immediately after the elections. For a long time, at least rhetorically, it appeared to be wavering on the IMF-backed stabilization program. The markets and the precariousness of Turkey's economic situation held AKP's populist impulses in check. More importantly perhaps, the day after the Turkish Parliament refused to allow the stationing of American troops on Turkish soil, the government's tight and harsh economic measures gave everyone the right signals. Partially due to that reflexive diligence and partially due to the rapidity of the war, the Turkish economy did not suffer nearly as much as most economic actors feared prior to the war.

By mid-year there was a steady decline in the interest rate and the currency appreciated considerably much to the consternation of exporters and those who invested in US dollars. The year ended with a lower than expected inflation rate, in fact the lowest in 25 years. Along the way the government also introduced many structural reforms, particularly on tax policy at the end of the year. Despite all these heartening developments serious observers were still concerned about 2004. For them the economy was still in a precarious condition and the government's temptation to do away with the independence of regulatory bodies did not augur well. After all is said and done though, the outlook on the future, pending the decision by the EU at the end of 2004 was mostly optimistic.

### **The stink, the tragedies and the glories**

Even the jaded Turkish public was shocked by the magnitude of the financial scandal associated with the Uzan family. The Uzans were one of the most iconoclastic, reclusive, powerful, fearsome and loathed of Turkish business families. It was no surprise, given their record that almost nobody had anything kind to say about them as the investigative fury intensified.

The drama began to unfold on June 12 when state authorities seized Çukurova Elektrik and Kepez Elektrik, two money churning energy distribution companies, from the family. Barely six weeks later family members and their lieutenants were forced to extricate themselves from administrative positions. The state regulatory bodies took charge of a financial and business mess of a multi-billion dollar magnitude. Thus was terminated the evitable rise of the Uzans, their long alleged malpractices in business, and perhaps not so coincidentally, the most rigorous political challenge to the government of AKP, Cem Uzan's right-wing populist Youth Party.

Within a month, the Uzans lost control of all their major assets except for media companies. Despite the snail's pace work rhythm of the courts, arrest warrants were issued for members of the family except for Cem Uzan. The

private possessions of the brothers Cem and Hakan such as their \$70million yachts were confiscated.

The investigations thus far revealed that the major Uzan bank, Imar Bank, put under receivership by the Banking authorities, was bled dry by the family and by Uzan relatives and cronies who siphoned off gigantic sums of money. Thousands of depositors are in a legal no man's land since the true figures for deposits are unknown. The bank has a record of duplicate and duplicitous bookkeeping, fictitious bond trading and of registering non-existent accounts. The Turkish banking watchdog BDDK (Banking Supervisory Board) is still trying to sort things out while the depositors who have enjoyed unrealistically high interest yields both on Turkish Lira and foreign currency deposits have become an angry lot. The Uzan group had also established Telsim, currently the second largest GSM operator in Turkey with a 35% market share (6 million users). The dealings of this company with the telecom giants Motorola and Nokia later caused a billion-dollar fraud case as the two multinationals sued Uzans for racketeering over a debt of \$3.2 billion on a New York Court. At the end of this ordeal the Turkish public also learned the hard fact that the bailout of the banking system as a whole cost the taxpayers who had to foot the bill for insolvent banks, some 46 billion dollars in total.

In October the AKP held its convention and elected Erdoğan once more as its leader. A few days later Turkey's main opposition party CHP that seemed devoid of any political imagination held its almost scandalous convention to rubberstamp the leadership of Mr. Deniz Baykal. As soon as the convention season was over Turkey found itself in the middle of new convulsions. The president of the Republic, Mr. Ahmet Necdet Sezer sent three different types of invitation to members of Parliament for the reception he was giving to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Turkish Republic. The President sent single-person invitations to those MPs whose wives wore a headscarf. This discriminatory policy reignited a debate over what constituted public space and whether or not such a policy could be legitimized by the principle of secularism. At the end the leadership of AKP chose to downplay the incident but some members, most notably the speaker of the Parliament did not attend the reception, thereby reciprocating the absence of the President at the reception a few months earlier to celebrate the 83d anniversary of the National Assembly.

On numerous occasions throughout the year this tension between the President and the AKP and the government and the secular elite erupted. Most often the problems had to do with suspicions concerning AKP government's commitment to secularism and doubts about the ulterior motives it might entertain when sending bills to the Parliament. The debate was most heated concerning two laws dealing with higher education. On the proposed legislation to overhaul the much debated Higher Education Council centered system, the government faced an almost unanimous body of

opposition from University presidents. Ultimately, the interuniversity council and the Ministry started a productive negotiations process. The second attempted change in the higher education law concerned the graduates of vocational schools that included Preacher Training Schools. With the new arrangements the graduates of these schools could enter universities more easily. This has triggered a barrage of attacks on the proposed legislation by the secular establishment that saw it as a guerilla tactic to place religiously inclined individuals in the state apparatus and the bill was withdrawn. Finally, in another controversial move, the government prepared a directive that redefined the purpose of Koranic courses and extended their working hours. In the wake of the resulting uproar the directive was silently withdrawn for further consideration.

The AKP had the wisdom not to let disagreements or disputes boil over, a pattern that begged the question as to why they brought those issues on the agenda the way they did to begin with. Professor İlter Turan proposes three possible explanations: "TO begin with, the AKP itself represents a coalition of voters that include, among others, a religious/true believer contingent. It is conceivable that some of proposed legislation is developed to cater to their wishes although the public reaction is highly predictable. These proposals are released to the public before they are formally considered in the Council of Ministers and sent to the parliament. They are then withdrawn indefinitely or for revisions. In this way, the radical constituencies may be shown that their preferences were given positive consideration but achieving what they demand is simply impossible at this time. Second, the government itself may be testing to see what is and is not possible in its search to loosen the resistance to the presence of religion in public life. It may also deliberately put forth somewhat radical proposals and then negotiate toward what it deems acceptable in the first instance. Finally, by putting forth proposals one after another, it may be working to reduce resistance to policies that accord greater legitimacy to religious considerations in public life. The secular establishment, the government may hope, will run out of steam in this never-ending battle. Furthermore, the secular establishment has become nervous, erratic in its responses, impatient and sometimes impolite in discourse, threatening in its tone and less than democratic in its approach. Such deportment has only made the government appear to be comprised of peaceful, reasonable people."

This year's natural tragedy occurred in the city of Bingöl, a poor Eastern province. An earthquake measuring 6.4 on the Richter scale struck the city after midnight on May 1<sup>st</sup>. 151 persons died and 520 injured. Over 70 of the dead were from among the students sleeping in a state dormitory that crumbled due to corrupt construction practices. Indeed among the collapsed buildings in the province a disproportionate number were state buildings. This led to a repeat of accusations advanced in previous quakes as well that corrupt officials were in cahoots with disreputable contractors using shoddy

materials and methods. As usual the victims were incensed because of the inadequate number of tents and favoritism in the distribution of aid material that flooded the province.

Bingöl would gain international notoriety later in the year when it transpired that all four suicide bombers that shook Turkey and the world with two sets of twin terrorist attacks in Istanbul came from that province.

On November 15<sup>th</sup> and five days later on November 20<sup>th</sup>, Istanbul, the seat of the Muslim caliphate for 400 years and one of the world's most cosmopolitan metropolises, was twice the target of twin terrorist attacks by suicide bombers. Turkey has finally stepped or been drawn into the world of Sept. 11. Over 50 individuals lost their lives and about 800 were wounded, and the sight of the HSBC bank's smoking tower completed the macabre *mise-en-scène*.

The first wave of attacks was directed against two synagogues during the Sabbath prayers. The visible target was Istanbul's presently small Jewish community, most of whom descendants of those Jews expelled from Spain in 1492. As it turned out, however, most of the victims were either passersby or shopkeepers in the vicinity of the synagogues. It was also noteworthy that only three days before the attacks, a well-attended *iftar* (the dinner to break fast during the holy month of Ramadan) was held at one of the synagogues, Neve Shalom. The Turkish public and government reacted to the shocking series of bombings with remarkable agility and rigor. The indomitably cosmopolitan spirit of the capital of two empires was instrumental in rejecting the bigotry of those who had carried out the attacks. The country reacted strongly and was repulsed as much by the sight of torn bodies as it was by the sheer evil of killing people at their most vulnerable when they prayed to their God. Erdogan paid an unprecedented visit to the chief rabbi and the government allowed the coffins of Jewish victims to be wrapped in the Turkish flag. Soon after the last coffins were buried and the perpetrators identified, the city and the country faced more distress when the British Consulate and the HSBC bank were the targets of suicide bombers. The available evidence indicated that the two series of attacks were related to one another and had been prepared by the same group of people.

Al-Qaeda assumed responsibility for both acts that were carried out by Turks who belonged to the Turkish Hizbullah. This group's many vile crimes in the name of religion, its torture and killing of moderate Muslims, including women were unearthed a few years ago. The attacks immediately raised questions about an intelligence failure. A debate also followed as to why the violence had taken place. Some tried to argue that Turkey was not the real target, while others sought to link its foreign policy choices to the calamities that had occurred. Yet another school of thought argued that the attacks were specifically directed against Turkey. Because it was the country's choice to be

modern, secular, democratic and allied to the West; because it was Turkey's aspiration to become a member of the European Union (EU), it had been made to pay the price. In short, Turkey was the target precisely because it is the antithesis of the Islamist dystopia.

Many Turks were ready to believe that even though Al-Qaeda assumed responsibility, other more sinister forces must have been behind the bombings. Conspiracy theorists of all stripes appeared to be shaping public opinion, and played on the fact that many Turks are deeply suspicious of the West and particularly unsympathetic to Israel. Islamist commentators in particular propounded the view that the Americans and/or the Israelis were behind the criminal acts. Turkey was being punished for its Iraqi policy and for having lately distanced itself from Israel. It was recalled that only a few days before the first wave of terrorism, Erdogan declined to meet Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon when he asked to stop over in Ankara on his way home from Moscow.

When all was said and done, however, the attacks were aimed at Turkey and the current government, although it may yet take time for many to allow this simple truth to sink in. It took place in Turkey; it killed and wounded Turks, could yet harm Turkey's economic recovery and could jeopardize its still-fragile political stability. After the initial trauma, the public appeared to go back to life as usual. On the one hand this was a healthy response. On the other it may indicate that the true dimensions of the attacks have not been fully grasped and the scale of the danger the country faces not fully appreciated. The second attack in particular put the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) in a tight spot insofar as the situation demanded the drawing of a clear demarcation line between the government and violent Islamists.

Many abroad feared a backlash by the military or other authoritarian centers of power in the wake of the attacks. Talk that martial law would be declared spread like wildfire. Indeed, one could hear many people commenting that it was the new permissiveness in Turkey that had facilitated the operations of the terrorists. Thankfully, most opinion makers took a firm stance against this type of reasoning. Apart from some cheap shots it directed against the media, the government did not adopt an authoritarian tone, and the Prime Minister was very defiant against terrorism.

Significantly the National Security Council found it necessary to reiterate Turkey's commitment to EU membership, at the end of a meeting held to discuss the attacks. Far more importantly, the public's desire to join the EU remained as strong as ever. Therefore, there is little reason to think that the reform process will slow down or come to a halt. The AKP's commitment to change is interest-driven. It can only survive in power and consolidate its



political position if it continues widening the democratic space in the country. To accept the false tradeoff between less democracy and more security will take the AKP into the playing field of those who cannot tolerate its political fortunes.

Erdoğan is a natural politician. There is no doubt that he understood both the nature of the problem that he faced and the hardness of the choices he had to make. He has expressed his regrets that the perpetrators were Turkish. He also understood the dark side of the extreme Islamist movement, which is entirely anti-modern, anti-secular and opposes globalization, and is therefore anti-AKP by its very existence. He can convince the country that the recent events are not part of a conspiracy, but, rather, manifestations of a real threat that stems from an unexpected but real enemy. In fact, after empathic statements about his unwillingness to use any Semitic religion as an adjective before a word like terrorism, he identified the deed as 'religious terrorism' and closed that debate. If in the coming months he truly rises to this challenge, Erdoğan will have made a significant contribution to Turkish democratic transformation in a secular system. This should also secure for him both the consolidation of his party's power and arguably the key to accession negotiations with the EU, for which Turkey is expecting a date to be set in December 2004.

On a better note Turkish pop singer Sertap Erener won the Eurovision song contest this year even receiving votes from Greek Cypriots. She thus fulfilled a decades old aspiration of Turks and did away with the resentment that Turkey usually came at the bottom in that contest. A Turkish film *Uzak* (Far) won the *grand prix* and *longue metrage* prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

### **Iraq and Turkish-American Relations**

The year 2003 has also turned out to be, perhaps unexpectedly, a threshold year for Turkish-American relations. The issue that defined the relations was, as would be expected, the American led war against Iraq and the position Turkey would take, and ultimately did take about cooperation.

The new and inexperienced AKP government led by Abdullah Gül held tough negotiations with Washington on the nature, scope and extent of Turkish cooperation for the war. The American demand consisted of the use of airbases in Turkey including those near Istanbul and the Black Sea Shore; permission to deploy up to 60,000 American troops on Turkish territory on the way to Iraq, which also meant the opening of a northern front. In return, the United States would agree to the establishment of a 20-km security zone in northern Iraq. Up to 50,000 Turkish troops would go into this zone, some 30,000 of which would be under US operational command. The United States also promised that the Kurdish parties in northern Iraq would not be allowed to send their forces to the major multicultural city of Kirkuk. The city has a

majority of Turcomans. Other promises were that the PKK fighters located in Iraq would be eliminated, and that Turkey would receive a \$6 billion in grants or \$24 billion in long-term loans. A final matter of utmost importance for Turkey was the protection of the Turcoman minority in northern Iraq.

As the negotiations for this final agreement were taking place, the government already allowed, with the approval of the Parliament, US technical personnel to upgrade several bases and send personnel, vehicles and material to the port city of Iskenderun. These developments indicated a willingness on the part of the government to satisfy Washington's demands. But the task itself proved harder to accomplish.

To begin with, there was almost no person or institution in Turkey that wanted the war to be waged. In fact, the government went out of its way to bring regional powers together in trying to find a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

On the issue of what Turkey must do in case of war the public was overwhelmingly opposed to cooperation. Of the institutions that would contribute to the making of the decision, the presidency was unequivocally opposed to Turkish cooperation without a UN resolution that legitimated the war against Iraq. This was also the position of the powerful speaker of the Parliament. The foreign ministry was in favor of cooperation. The military that had great reservations about the war and entertained grave concerns particularly about the future of northern Iraq also appeared to be in favor. The government itself was divided, and as later reports suggested, Prime Minister Gül was at best uncomfortable with the idea of allowing the opening of a northern front if war proved inevitable.

Such divisions were also reflected in the ultimate body that makes security-related decisions in Turkey, the National Security Council. That all-important institution declined to endorse a yes vote in its meeting held one day before the critical vote in the Parliament. The opposition party CHP was against the deployment of American troops but supported the unilateral sending of Turkish troops to northern Iraq, a move that the United States explicitly said could not be accepted. In the end, despite Mr. Erdoğan's strong appeal for a yes vote, approximately 100 deputies from the AKP seemed to have defected in a closed vote and the resolution was technically defeated although the yeas exceeded the nays.

The decision of the Turkish Parliament not to support the government's decree came as a great shock to the Americans. Although there was great disappointment, the official position was one of respect for Turkey's democratic will. Despite the fact that the decision would keep the 4<sup>th</sup> infantry out of the war, Washington did not choose to punish Turkey. The next item of negotiations was whether Turkey would allow the use of its airspace. Before a

final agreement was reached on that, the war started. This put to rest the claim by many in Turkey, including some in the government and the military, that the Pentagon had no plan B and that without Turkey, the war could not be waged. Later on, an American official would summarize this by suggesting that Turkey had an exaggerated sense of its importance.

Once the war began, since the US had to rely exclusively on the cooperation of the Kurdish factions and their militias in northern Iraq, Turkey's declared red lines were soon erased. The Kurdish forces entered the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul and indeed ransacked those cities' public records. Turkey wanted to hold the right to enter northern Iraq in case of either humanitarian need or PKK activity. In fact, General Özkök laid out three possible conditions for a Turkish incursion: a refugee flow into Turkey, an attack on Turkish forces and armed conflict in northern Iraq. The US did not look favorably on any attempt by Turkey to send troops to northern Iraq. Although the tension between the parties was real, it also became clear later on that Turkey did allow the passage of Special Forces to northern Iraq, the use of its airspace before the Parliament's decision and the transportation of wounded US soldiers to the Incirlik base in Adana. As a sign of Turkey's continuing importance for the US in the future, Secretary of State Powell visited Ankara on April 2 and offered Turkey \$1 billion in grants or \$8.5 in loans. The U.S. Senate approved the loan on condition that Turkey would not unilaterally send troops to northern Iraq. The agreement concerning the loan was finally signed in September but to date Turkey had not used any part of it despite US insistence for Ankara to take the money.

The major casualty of this episode was the intimately close relation between the Pentagon and the Turkish Armed Forces. A by-product of this fallout was the redefinition of the so-called strategic partnership of the 1990's between the two countries. From an American perspective, the Turkish military failed to be there when called upon in a moment of need. Such a message was given in a most articulate, but offensive for many Turks, fashion by the undersecretary of defense, Paul Wolfowitz, one of the most influential Turcophiles in Washington and a man committed to Turkey's democratization. In an interview he gave to CNN-TURK TV station, Wolfowitz expressed his disappointment that the Turkish military failed to take the lead in a security related decision and asked that Turkey acknowledge it made a mistake by not supporting the ousting of a bloody tyrant. This interview led to many controversies. Was Wolfowitz asking Turkey to apologize? Was he expressing regret that the Turkish democracy functioned and the civilians prevailed? If so what kind of democracy did he envisage for Turkey?

When most people in Turkey thought that the bottom must have been reached in Turkish-American relations with that interview, an incident that took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July led to an even further deterioration of relations. As if to further erase Turkey's red lines, detachments from the 101<sup>st</sup> airborne

forcefully entered the liaison office of Turkish Special Forces in Sulaymaniyah. It took two full days to secure the release of the prisoners. The Turkish public opinion was outraged. A joint military committee to investigate the matter issued a report that did not include an apology by the US military. The Americans alleged that the Turkish Special Forces in the area were preparing for actions unwarranted by their mission mandate. The work needed to repair relations between the two militaries immediately began and NATO Supreme Commander Gen. Jones and CENTCOM Commander Gen. Abuzaid both visited Ankara at the same time.

The next important topic in the relations was whether or not Turkey would be ready to send troops to Iraq. The US called for the sending of troops by Turkey when Ankara expressed its readiness to be of help on that matter. The Turkish government entertained this controversial idea that was very unpopular with the public mainly for two reasons: the first and the most obvious one was the government's desire to make amends with the US for letting them down at the last moment back in March. Equally important was the desire on the part of the Turkish military to be physically present in Iraq. As Chief of Staff General Hilmi Özkök remarked on August 30, "You cannot expect to win the lottery unless you buy a ticket". The military believed that it could thereby provide a deterrent to the Kurds should they want to take advantage of the disarray in Iraq and make attempts to either cleanse the region of non-Kurds or declare independence. For that matter, the Turkish military was also apprehensive about the presence of 5000 fighters of the separatist PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) in northern Iraq against whom the US took no action. That no action was being taken although the US considered the PKK a terrorist organization and made promises to Turkey about that, added to the existing climate of mistrust between the parties.

This concern with northern Iraq was the primary reason as to why an agreement could not be reached easily about where the Turkish troops would be deployed. In the event, PM Tayyip Erdogan who replaced Gül right before the war in March brought the issue to the parliament in mid-October in an unexpectedly swift move. This time the governing party gave its overwhelming support to the decree that indicated Turkey's readiness to send troops to Iraq. From that point onwards, the Kurds as well as other Iraqi constituencies, and ultimately the governing council itself raised serious objections. These objections were topped by the CPA administrator Paul Bremer's report that the presence of Turkish troops would do more harm than good. Thereupon the US effectively withdrew its request. Later on the Turkish government announced that it would not send its military forces to Iraq.

As the year draws to a close a preliminary assessment of what it all means can be made. Turkish-American relations will have a different coloring from now on. The disappointment *cum* anger with the Turkish armed forces felt in Washington has not dissipated. Moreover there is a shift in the nexus of these

relations from an exclusively security oriented one to a kind that takes Turkey's soft power more seriously. In other words Turkey will now be as important for the US for what it is as for where it is. In a post September 11 world where avoidance of a clash of civilizations is of paramount importance Turkey's identity as a modern, secular, democratic capitalist country that successfully integrated its Islamists in the political process counts for much. The bloody attacks against four targets in two sets of twin terrorist actions brought this issue to the center of the debate on Turkey that takes place both in the USA and in the EU. It is safe to say then that although Turkish-American relations have still not fully recuperated, they will not break. These relations will continue to thrive but do so for a rationale that is different than what prevailed during the Cold War.

### **NATO and Turkey**

The year started with a crisis over the issue of NATO's delayed response to Turkey's routine request for assistance against a possible Iraqi missile attack as the war in Iraq loomed closer. The alliance, to the fury of both the US and Turkey, failed to give a prompt and affirmative response. Belgium, France and Germany felt that such affirmation would give a stamp of approval to initial US preparations for war against Iraq. Turkey viewed this reluctance as an underestimation of Turkey's importance.

The Turkish political establishment shared the belief stated by many Western politicians and the outgoing NATO Secretary Lord Robertson that in light of new threats the Alliance was facing; Turkey was no longer a southern flank country, but a front line country. Especially in the wake of 9/11 attacks, Turkey's position as a secular and democratic Muslim country with historical and cultural credentials in Central Asia, the Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East made her a unique asset for the West. One could add to this that Turkey also participates in the main western security and political organizations

The reluctance on the part of some European allies in the Trans-Atlantic Alliance to provide Turkey with the assistance she requested against Iraq led many to question the future and viability of NATO as a whole. France, Germany and Belgium in particular objected to the American demand to mobilize NATO assets on the grounds that this would give the world a message that the war was inevitable. At the end, the assistance was granted on NATO's Defense Review Committee where France is not represented.

Turkey had been an adamant supporter of international cooperation against terrorism and this endorsement represented a rising awareness in this regard. Another positive sign of this endorsement was the willingness, especially on the part of new and aspiring members, to integrate their security agendas with that of the US. Turkey, as demonstrated by the crisis over NATO

assistance back in the spring, had been suffering from the widening gap between the security agendas of European powers and the US.

Her position as a strategic partner of the US in the Middle East on the one hand, and as a candidate for membership in the EU on the other created a dilemma in the planning of Ankara's security and threat priorities. The dilemma was intensified by the fact that although its long-term interests lay with the EU, the immediate security problems of Turkey literally begged for cooperation with the US. Thus, it was vital for Turkey that the Trans-Atlantic Alliance remained both relevant and viable.

Another positive development in terms of the relevance of the Alliance and Turkey's importance in her operations came with the assignment of Hikmet Çetin, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and speaker of Parliament, to the position of NATO's high civilian representative in Afghanistan. The request to nominate suitable candidates had been made months ago, and the AKP government had nominated the respected politician although he is a veteran of the social-democratic CHP. Çetin's assignment was announced on November 19th, right after the first bombings against the Synagogues and just before the second attacks against British targets in İstanbul. Coupled with these events perpetrated by local fundamentalist terrorists with links to al-Qaeda, Çetin's assignment was the more meaningful. His task, due to begin on January 2004, consists of the coordination and implementation of NATO's political and military assistance to the Afghan government. It is a vital task in the shaping of the new Afghan polity.

### **The EU and the island**

Among the many challenges that the developments of this year posed to the untested AKP government was the EU accession process. The party campaigned on a platform of unequivocal support for Turkey's membership in the EU. Although its detractors did and would continue to argue that it was all a hypocritical show in order to subvert the secular nature of the Republic, the AKP kept its promise. In a way the EU accession process provided the government with a ready-made political program to follow that had the added benefit of serving the party well.

Once the new accession partnership prepared by the European Commission was matched by Turkey's revised National Program, the road map was in hand. The government then doggedly pursued the reform packages, facing many challenges and serious opposition mostly from the judiciary and the military. Arguably, the chief of staff General Özkök who on numerous occasions reiterated his commitment to the goal of EU membership was a tacit supporter of the reforms. Although he tried to assuage his own institution on many instances ultimately his positive view of the EU reform process proved

to be critical for the government. With the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> packages that the Parliament passed Turkey was in fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria.

President Sezer objected to the abolition of article 8 of the anti-terrorism law but ultimately signed the 6<sup>th</sup> package into law thereby making it legal to learn Kurdish and broadcast in languages other than Turkish (read Kurdish). More strenuous objections were raised against the 7<sup>th</sup> package that changed the status of the National Security Council and reduced the role of the military in politics. That package too was enacted by the Parliament and approved by the President. The more serious opposition to the new laws and the spirit of reform that they embodied came in the form of bureaucratic subversion. Having observed that tendency the European Commission suggested that the real test for Turkey now was in the implementation of the reforms. In fact, although the Progress Report acknowledged the great distance covered by the Turkish government, innumerable small instances of bureaucratic obfuscation were cited in it as well. One last and remarkably transparent example of the bureaucratic petty resistance to the new order of things came during the Brussels summit. As PM Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Gül were getting ready to celebrate a favorable wording on the Cyprus linkage in the Presidency conclusions word came from the province of Van that posters in Kurdish were being banned. The organizers of a public event who put the posters on the wall were being taken into custody. The fury of the PM and the Justice Minister in Ankara were not enough to overrule the local court's decision and the appeal court's upholding of that decision.

Two days after the Brussels summit the most important and consequential Parliamentary elections in Turkish Cypriot history took place. The voters in the northern part of the island appeared to be split right down the middle in these elections that were as much a referendum on the Annan Plan submitted to the parties last year by the Secretary General of the UN to solve the Cyprus problem. The EU was reportedly very active as was Turkey to share their views and positions with the electorate. The constitutionally neutral President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Mr. Rauf Denktaş has actively and very vocally opposed the Annan Plan and all but called the opposition politicians traitors. Mr. Denktaş was responsible for the decision to take no part in negotiations of the Annan Plan last year at Copenhagen and later on not taking the Plan to a referendum at The Hague in March. This intransigence was much criticized by some circles in Turkey who believed that the Greek side, particularly President Papadopoulos, liked the plan even less than Mr. Denktaş since its political framework denies the Greek side the patrimony of the whole island.

The recriminations between the Turkish government and Mr. Denktaş highlighted the strong disagreements between the veteran politician and the AKP leadership. The Cyprus issue is linked to the accession of Turkey to the EU and in fact it is seen as a necessary condition to start negotiations. Putting

the justness of such a position on the part of the EU aside, this is the hard political reality that Turkey faces. The Republic of Cyprus controlled by the Greek community on the island and is recognized by the international system will become a member of the EU on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Turkey, on the other hand, will know whether or not it will start accession negotiations in December. Therefore it is politically difficult for any government in Turkey to take the step of signing on to the Annan Plan without the guarantee that in return negotiations will start, provided of course that Turkey fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria. In the absence of a deal on the other hand, Greek Cypriots will become members of the EU and the Annan Plan will be taken off the table. In the next few months the fate of the island, the Turks of the island and Turkey's European vocation will in all likelihood be decided. The Turkish government gives signs that it is prepared to go back to the negotiating table despite Mr. Denktas' objections. Whether or not the EU will, for once, find an imaginative way of bridging the time gap between May 1<sup>st</sup> and mid-December remains to be seen.

Ultimately the resolution of the Cyprus problem is intimately linked to Turkey's reform processes and her European vocation. Therefore beyond its intrinsic value, Cyprus is also a proxy war between those who favor a European Turkey and those who dread the prospects.

May the good side win.