Young Leaders Study Group on the Future of Europe: The EU, the West, and the Rest

"The EU and the Limits of Enlargement"

Report

Third Conference

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Introduction

The third conference of the Young Leaders Study Group on the Future of Europe, convened by the American Council on Germany, the Dräger Foundation and the ZEIT foundation Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius, could hardly have taken place at a better moment or place. The 35 participants met from April 24 to 29, 2007, in Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey, to broadly discuss "the EU and the limits of enlargement." When the meeting was planned, it was already clear that it would coincide with the presidential election in Turkey. What the organisers could not have foreseen, however, was the intensity of the debate developing around this election and, thus, the deep insight into the fabric of Turkish society that the group would get. Witnessing a military intervention *in situ* and discussing its ramifications with both local experts and the Turkish colleagues from the group simply is a rare opportunity.

While these most tangible events shall not overshadow the whole of this report, it nevertheless seems apt to start with the end (agenda-wise), i.e. the domestic situation in Turkey: How is the current debate shaped by fundamental issues like secularism, and what is the role of business and civil society? (1). The second part of the report takes a look at Turkey's relation with the European Union, in particular of course the membership negotiation process, and with the United States (2). Finally, the focus is on the wider region: what is Turkey's foreign policy towards its neighbours and can the country serve as a model for democratisation in the Middle East? (3)

1 Turkey's domestic situation

On the day of the group's arrival in Turkey's capital Ankara, participants learned that the country's Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, had just announced that not he but his foreign minister, Abdullah Gül, would run for President in an election scheduled for Friday of the same week. Already this announcement, ending weeks and months of speculation, promised a very interesting conference.
Moreover, the itinerary of the group was designed to give them a full picture of the country. Turkey, one participant explained, can be seen through a power triangle: One corner of it is Ankara representing the State and the security forces; the other is Istanbul, the commercial and cultural centre of the country; and the third is the Periphery, the large parts of the country where the non-urban population lives. The hypothesis is that one needs the support of at least two of the three sides in order to govern Turkey. Thus, the group's visit first to Ankara, then to Istanbul, passing the periphery on a seven hour-long bus ride, would give it at least a glimpse at all three power centres.

1.1 The Presidential Elections

The Presidential election in Turkey was fiercely contested because of the overwhelming majority that the Justice and Development Party (AKP) enjoys in parliament. As the Turkish president is elected by parliament, the AKP's near-two thirds majority allowed it to simply pick its own candidate who would be sure to win in the third round of the election (in which a simple majority suffices). However, this near-constitutional majority is based on only 34% of the cast votes. This is an – unintentional, of course – result of the 1980 post-coup system designed by military, which does not rely on a proper system of checks and balances but on state control, as one participant explained. It also introduced a 10% threshold intended to keep Islamist and Kurdish parties out of parliament but which worked against mainstream parties in the last election.

In a discussion with the vice-presidents of the major parties – the AKP, the People's Republican Party CHP, and the True Path Party DYP – the group learned about their different motivations. One speaker claimed that some of AKP statements are incompatible with Republican values. He saw the Turkish system of checks and balances under threat if the three most important political positions in the country, the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of Parliament were all from the same Islamist stream within AKP. Another added that, usually, the Presidential election is held by freshly elected Parliament. Therefore, the AKP's decision to hold the election at the end of the parliamentary turn was against the tradition and usage of the Turkish democratic process. One participant said that simple majority rule alone could not respond adequately to the societal tensions in the country and that the AKP undermined its credibility by trying to push through its presidential candidate. One speaker defended the AKP saying that the governing party was simply playing be the rules as indeed other parties had equally done before.

While the most important argument of those opposing a President Gül was his being a devout Muslim (and, thus, having a wife that wears the headscarf), those in favour of his candidacy mainly pointed to his track record as a foreign minister, as which he brought Turkey closer to the EU and even showed a relative openness on the Cyprus issue. Moreover, Foreign Minister Gül was highlighted as someone who had indeed stood up against Islamist tendencies within AKP.

In any case, the end of this election week was to show that the whole debate was less about the *person* of Gül (or, for that matter, his wife) but about the distribution of *power* within Turkish society. In this sense, the one high-ranking Turkish official who, on Wednesday still, claimed that the presidential elections were not such a crucial event and things would go on, was proven wrong a little more than 48 hours later when the Turkish Armed Forces issued a statement late on Friday night. The statement followed the first election round in which Gül failed to secure the necessary two-thirds majority due to which the opposition appealed to the Constitutional Court to annul the vote.

The "military intervention" as some called it, changed the course of the country commentators agreed the next day. One assumed that the opposition parties had instigated the military to act because they themselves would not have enough leverage. Others more fatalistically thought that the military would never lose, thanks less to their arms and more to their smart politicians. The army has highjacked the agenda, not with tanks but as a sign of the post-modern times we live in, through the internet, one commentator said. Although the statement as such did not contain anything new, it was the harsh tone and its severe wording, similar to the justifications of the real coups from the past, which made it so serious. Moreover, the timing of the publication (an hour before midnight) was deemed significant: Not waiting for the morning gave it a whiff of cloak-and-dagger; and it seemed intentionally placed before a Saturday when the stock exchange is closed, in order not to harm the national economy.

Observers saw the statement as meant to influence the Constitutional Court, expressing a new kind of "soft power" of the military. Instead of rolling tanks in the street, they would issue statements or stage "pro-democracy demonstrations" in Istanbul or Ankara. To the participants, the events showed two things: First, as one participant remarked, there was much less civilian control of military than had been reported to the group. And second, the military may after all not even be interested in joining the EU, as membership would infringe on its powers. What is worse, it apparently had the means at hand to severely hinder the process if it wanted to.

The reason for this has as much to do with the founding of the Republic in 1923 by Kemal Atatürk as with the last 'real coup' of 1980 after which much of the current Turkish constitution was revised. Thus by tradition and by law, the military is entrusted with the safeguarding of Turkey's secularist identity – an obligation that was last used to justify the

'quasi coup' of 1997 in the wake of which the AKP was founded as a moderate offshoot of the dissolved Welfare Party. The interplay of secularism, Islam, and nationalism is the topic of the next section.

1.2 Secularism, the "Headscarf Republic", and a rising Nationalism

The separation of church and state was unknown to the Ottoman Empire, one speaker explained. Despite of that, the *Pax Ottomana* thus was a real success as there was no discrimination towards the around 20 different ethnic communities living in it.

The modern Turkish tradition of secularism is close to the French notion of *laïcité*, as some speakers described it. It was introduced by Atatürk to foster the young republic's Western orientation and as a bulwark against a political Islam that was regarded as backward. The military has taken over the role of guardian of these principles, which are at the heart of the debate about a pious Muslim such as foreign minister Gül becoming the head of a secular state. In fact, one edition of the Turkish Daily News that appeared during the conference featured a supplement headlining "The Headscarf Republic" and portraying prominent women that cover their head.

While some of the participants voiced their concern that it should indeed make no difference whether Ms Gül as *first lady* wore the headscarf or a bikini, one speaker explained that there existed a "domino theory" in Turkish domestic politics with regard to the secular principles. Among some in the political establishment, there is a real fear that "if we allow one thing and another, we'll end up being like Iran." Interestingly, speakers both from the government and the opposition agreed that the headscarf had not been an issue in the elder days, but has become politicised only recently. A faction of the AKP used it to woo conservative voters, while the secular establishment exploited it to stir fears of an Islamist takeover.

In stark difference to the debates in the politico-military establishment about a Muslim president, the public seems less concerned by such prospect. One speaker referred to a study conducted by a think-tank (TESEV) and a non-governmental organisation (or NGO, called ARI movement) that found that a majority of the Turkish population does not see secularism under threat. While there is a growing religious identity, this does not translate into political terms. Instead, there is, for example, a decrease in support for religious laws like the one against adultery proposed by the AKP government. Moreover, a majority would not view the military as safeguarding democracy; the people favour a civilian government and wish the military to retreat, the speaker continued. This may be one of the reasons why the military was hardly mentioned by speakers during most of the conference, until it appeared powerfully on its last day, as one participant noted.

The secular principles may guarantee the freedom of religion and expression, and thus provide the basis for a successful democracy, yet practical discrimination in daily life does exist, one participant noted. In Turkey, non-Muslims cannot become generals, ambassadors, or mayors – unlike in the Ottoman Empire, he said. Despite Turkish law being, in letter and spirit, not Islamic, there was an assumption that, after all, a Turk is a Muslim and Islam is part of Turkey's identity.

This observation leads to the question of whether Turkey is culturally too different to become a EU member, as one participant asked. This should not be an argument, speakers responded, because Turkish Islam is not suitable for radicalisation and Turkey shares all the values from the EU constitution. Another added that there are, in fact, three Muslim countries in Europe: One is secular (Turkey), another is islamo-nationalist (Bosnia-Herzegovina), and the third one is badly organised (Albania). He could not understand, he went on, why the latter two were given more European credentials than Turkey.

With regard to an alleged incompatibility of Islam and women's rights, some verses in the Quran are indeed disadvantageous for women but that these should not be taken literally, one

speaker advised. There is not a single Turkish law that discriminates women, he said, and pointed to the male-female ratio of academics being higher in Turkey than in the United States. Moreover, there is no real or serious attempt to introduce an economic system based on Islamic law, as some opponents of the AKP allege; only some financial services that claim to be more in line with Islam, for example by not charging an interest. The AKP, one speaker predicted, will over time develop into some kind of Muslim Democrat party modelled after the German CDU (Christian Democratic Union). Much more worrisome was that fact that many secularists often see themselves first as republicans and only then as democrats, while it should be the other way round.

Part of the discussion about the secular nature of the Turkish state centred on a perceived rise of nationalism, highlighted most recently in the assassination of the Armenian author Hrant Dink or, only days before the conference, the murders of three employees of a Christian publishing house in the provincial town of Malatya. Many speakers referred to these events as sad facts for which, however, not the whole Turkish nation should be blamed. To the contrary, the demonstrations following these murders showed that the majority of the people are against this and that Turkey has a proud of tradition of tolerance. Moreover, there was also a number of incidents against secular politicians and judges, therefore not only against religious or ethnic minorities.
One speaker linked the recent rise in nationalism to the way the country was treated disrespectfully by EU after accession negotiations had started. Another perceived a dangerous alliance between nationalists and Islamists opposed to European reforms aimed to enforce democratic control of the military, minority rights, and religious freedoms. A third saw the reasons more in the domestic politics and in 2007 being an election year.
In particular, the infamous article 301 of the Turkish penal code banning the "insult of Turkishness" received some attention from the participants. Most speakers, however, defended the existence of the article and only criticised its wording or application. One speaker said that not the law itself is the problem but some of the prosecutors applying it. Therefore, better training and judicial reform would do better than an abolition of the article. Another speaker regretted that "Turkishness" is a vague notion and proposed to use "Turkish nation" instead. One speaker, lamenting that when the Republic was established, the liberal model of multicultural Ottoman Empire had vanished, even remarked that Turkey flies more flags than even the United States. This, indeed, was visible to the participants every day around Ankara and Istanbul.

1.3 Business, Civil Society, and the Media

In addition to the secularist nature of politics, Turkish business, civil society and the media can tell a story about the state of society. On the first, there are some impressive data to present. Turkey's growth rate averaged an annual 7,4% recently, with single-digit inflation for the first time and an export boom based on a productivity increase. The gross domestic product (GDP) rose from 2.600 to 5.400 US dollars per capita (in money exchange rates) between 2001 and 2006. In the past two years (2004-06), 11,500 new companies were founded in Turkey – compared to only 3,000 companies in the 24 years before.
A similar rise can be seen in foreign direct investments (FDI): Over the second half of the 20th century (1954-2004), foreign companies invested some 20 billion US dollars in Turkey. This figure has risen to 30 billion US dollars from 2004 to 2006 alone. More important than these dry figures is that fact that the economic recovery (combined with the opening of the negotiations) has not only brought welfare to the country but also self-confidence. Today, a visitor can hear the same story in Ankara and Istanbul, whereas before, the opinions from business and politics about how the country should be run did not match.

With hindsight, the year 2001 with its fundamental economic and financial crisis marked a turning point for Turkey's economy. The pre-crisis years were underperforming decades with high inflation and a huge public sector deficit, one speaker explained. The economic situation was exacerbated by political uncertainty when governments stayed in office for an average 18 months only. No structural reforms were undertaken in these years marked by boom and bust cycles of growth.
In 2001, former World Bank official and then Turkish minister for the economy, Kemal Dervis, successfully conducted a rescue operation. He introduced wide-ranging structural reforms, a fiscal correction and tight monetary policy. When the governing coalition broke up a little later, the AKP came to power. Not only did it continue but even reinforce this policy approach. These reforms unlocked the "FDI door closed since 1954," as one speaker put it, with the outcome that Turkey is now accepted as an EU candidate and started negotiations in October 2005.
Admittedly, not all is Turkey's own credit. The country benefited from a supportive global environment providing financial liquidity and a renewed appetite for risk. Moreover, there are regional and sectoral differences: In the East and Southeast of the country, there is less of a boom; indeed, the socio-economic situation in the Southeast is a real challenge, one speaker reported. Nevertheless, some "Anatolian tigers" exist. Most investments are made in the services sector, for example through the telecom privatisation, but also in manufacturing.
Yet, another speaker claimed that Turkey remains below its competitive edge failing to create a high-tech or IT dominance like Eastern Europe, China, and India. This is due to enduring problems in the education system producing only weak research and development facilities. In addition, there is still a strong frustration with the bureaucracy on the side of foreign investors: While laws may be fair to foreigners, there is a populist, nationalist mood in the implementing bureaucracy, in particular in the real estate sector, one speaker lamented.

Civil society, for its part, does not yet enjoy a similar level of boom. In a panel discussion with representatives from Turkish and international NGOs, the group explored the role and influence of civil society organizations in Turkey. Starting out broadly, one speaker deplored the limited depth and breadth of giving among the Turkish population. While a general helpfulness among the people existed, the levels of civic participation are low. The most active people in this sector are male, well educated, and better off.
Historically, Turkey has a rich legacy in foundations dating back from Ottoman times. However, these are more "brick and mortar" institutions, often running operations like universities, schools, or hospitals. They have not yet become grant-making organisations that feed an active civil society. A hindering legacy stems from the 1980 military coup, which deeply traumatised many activists. Since then, it has been difficult to separate NGO activities from politics, and in particular NGOs in the human rights or women's rights field fight with continuously low levels of membership.
Many of the recent changes to the NGO landscape happened thanks to EU, one speaker explained. The Turkish foundation law was put in line with EU requirements, leading to a normalisation of the legal environment. The prospect of EU accession imposed political discipline and made it possible for advocacy groups to refer to EU language and statements. What is more, credibility in the EU also gave the NGOs a push at home. Now, there even is a role for NGOs to promote the image of the EU in Turkey, one speaker said, referring to a civil society dialogue project run jointly with the European Commission.
In general, the EU process has proven to be a catalyst to do more advocacy work, thus contributing to an overall strengthening of the sector. Yet it remains important, one panellist recalled, not to just fill existing gaps in the social fabric but also to hold state accountable for those holes.

Especially in comparison with the transition countries from Central and Eastern Europe, the Turkish NGO scene is different. There, given also a more enabling legal environment, funds from both the United States and the European Union entirely changed the landscape. Turkey has never received such amounts of money, nor does it have the same legal opportunities. However, Turkish NGOs should not be compared directly to their Central European or even American homologues, one speaker said, as long as they adhered to standards of openness and transparency. It is good, she furthermore noted, that some NGOs started to look beyond borders and that Turkey, for example, has become a donor in the Balkans.
Two large question marks remain over the work of Turkish NGOs, however, speakers agreed, one being internal and the other external. Internally, many NGOs lack basic democratic credentials themselves, as their chairmen are also founders of the organisation, sticking to office as long as possible. Most NGOs are grassroot organisations with less than 100 members, so it is difficult for them to claim representativeness. Unfortunately, they are also not good at building coalitions when, due to personality clashes, they tend to focus on their own differences rather than the main, common goal. This was the case, one speaker explained, when Turkish NGOs could not manage to produce draft reform of the said article 301 despite being asked to do so by the Prime Minister.
With regard to the environment, the question is whether democratisation in Turkey is self-sustainable, i.e. whether it would continue without pressure (or rewards) from the European Union. A number of speakers was rather pessimistic saying there is no "earthquake plan" if things went wrong. Another weakness is the relation of NGOs to the media. The latter generally provide limited coverage of their activities, and these organisations have found it difficult to enter the media market. Even at the time of a nation-wide focused campaign for a reform of the penal code, media hardly reported on these efforts.

The media in Turkey can be broadly divided into two groups, the participants learned from a panel of journalists: Islamist and mainstream media. The latter is generally pro-EU, not least due to its business ownership. However, this EU-positive message is often conveyed too superficially and akin to brainwashing. Islamist media has been on the rise in recent years, supporting religious trends as well as most of the AKP's policies. Turkey also boasts more than 300 different TV channels, a number that could be quadrupled with digital antenna technology, as one speaker reported. All Turkish universities, he added, and nine out of ten school children at secondary and primary schools enjoy internet access.
In general, the media supported both the 1997 coup (against the Islamic government of the time) and the AKP government, at least until the debate about the presidential election, one speaker observed. The dominant role of the state has lead to a media language that is shaped by the official discourse. Especially on topics like the Armenian or Kurdish issue, the media simply reproduce government rhetoric.
An overall weakness of the Turkish media, one self-critical journalist told the group, is the fact that it is selling convictions rather than analyses. This is done, he said, in response to popular demand: You are liked for your convictions, not for your analyses. Moreover, there is high and harsh competition; as a result, the Turkish press is more sensationalist than its Western counterpart.
The role of the media in the EU integration process is ambivalent, another speaker explained. Interestingly, the press focuses on personal freedoms and contentious politico-cultural issues and does not touch the economic and social issues stemming from the reform process. Indeed, only one monthly paper, a supplement to the daily *Radikal*, gives detailed background information on the actual negotiations and the necessary conditions for EU membership. Despite the recent plunge in public support, the majority of media still argues for Turkish membership in the EU, although considerable voices see a threat of the country disintegrating.

Moreover, contributions in favour of EU membership are often labelled as triggered by foreign agents and directed against a homogenous nation. The media climate, therefore, remains tense, and not everyone is so convinced of the benevolent intentions of Turkey's two main partners, the European Union and the United States.

2 Vital partners: Turkey, the European Union, and the United States

Even though the conference was entitled "The Limits of Enlargement," the discussion did not centre on this somewhat philosophical – and therefore often ideological – argument about where the EU should draw a line around itself and, more important, where exactly this line should be drawn. The fact that the EU has started accession negotiations with Turkey has done quite a lot to end the dispute about the country's actual or alleged Europeaness. In this sense, the group focused much more on reforms in Turkey induced by the EU and the negotiation process itself rather than speculating about whether Turkey was culturally (or religiously, for that matter) too different to be European.

2.1 "Euro-reforming" Turkey

Speaking about the economic effects of the accession negotiations, one presenter said that the importance of the EU process could not be exaggerated. It has brought divergent groups together who normally did not collaborate. In particular, the AKP was dead against EU integration when it was in the opposition, one speaker told the group, so it was not without irony that now their government is most adamant in promoting reforms. The EU has become an anchor for Turkish society and a very important domestic actor, one speaker said. The breaking point was reached on December 17, 2004, when the EU finally admitted, "now, we're serious..." Others involved in the process saw a real transformation going on for a longer time already.

The past four to five years of political and economic reforms have changed Turkey in many aspects, one interlocutor reported. While a first phase focused more on political reforms in order to pass the critical limit of the Copenhagen criteria, it is the second phase that has begun after the successful passing of this test in December 2004. This phase is marked by an upgrading of standards in democratisation, human rights, and the rule of law in Turkey – standards that are set by the EU, but which are good for Turkey anyway, one speaker admitted.

Such a going-ahead-regardless approach to the negotiations seems apt given the current (and potentially future) difficulties involved in the cumbersome opening and closing of the 35 negotiation chapters, each requiring unanimous approval by all 27 member states. This is why Turkey, earlier this year, presented its own seven-year road map to complete whatever is needed to become EU-fit, a step that was broadly welcomed also by speakers from the EU. 90% of the requirements help Turkey anyway such as food standards and safety regulations; the 10% that need serious negotiations, like milk or corn quotas, will only be considered for actual membership, one speaker explained. In any case, Turkey had nothing to lose (except, maybe, for its pride) but only to gain from the accession process, he said.

The basic economic reforms have already taken hold, he continued, pointing to low inflation and high growth rates and a fiscal discipline that would make countries like France or Germany pale in comparison. The thriving Turkish economy has also given a boost to social life and the arts. With culture being the dough of European integration, as one speaker said, it is noteworthy that Istanbul has been nominated European capital of culture 2010. If it were only about Istanbul, it could enter the EU tomorrow, another speaker said. Small wonder if

the city has more economic power (its output being 130 billion Euros each year) than many countries in the world, another added.
However, a few more challenges exist beyond the boundaries of the city upon the Bosporus, particularly with regard to the social transformation of the country. The agricultural sector, in which currently some 30 % of the Turkish workforce (down from 70 % a decade or two ago) contributes only 13% to the country's GDP, will undergo massive changes on its way to European competitiveness. Most subsistence farmers will have to look for a different job long before the date of entry, causing serious internal migration pressure, one speaker predicted. Such changes will take time, which is why, even from a Turkish point of view, it is fortunate that EU accession is not imminent, one speaker acknowledged.
This latter point, in fact, is too often neglected in the current discussion about Turkish membership, one speaker reminded the group: Which Turkey would eventually enter the EU? While the process of radical change has already started, it is difficult to predict how Turkey will look like on the day of its accession. After all, this would be some ten to twelve years from today until which point major policy developments were needed on both sides. Some speakers were not convinced whether the current reform process in Turkey was self-sustaining, i.e. whether it would continue without strong EU pressure. In particular, the question is whether a strong nationalism opposed to the pooling of sovereignty or popular demand for better governance through the EU will prevail.

2.2 The state of European integration

While Turkey can do – and indeed has already done – a lot to prepare for accession, one thing it cannot influence is the other part of the equation, i.e. preparedness in the European Union. The EU state of affairs, two years after the institutional crisis emerged following the French and Dutch referendum on the proposed Constitutional Treaty and one month following the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, was not a major topic of this conference. It represented, nonetheless, a thread that was woven through many of the discussions.
What was part of the discussion was the general direction of the European political system. One speaker told the group that European integration was in fact built on various parallel and supportive institutions, like the EU, the Council of Europe, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This meant that the overall integration process in Europe could continue even if and when the EU as an institution is presently stumbling.
What is more, he observed a global crisis of democracy where parties and party leaders alike have lost strength and their hold on the people. Parties and elections, though still vital for a functioning democracy, are outdated institutions of the 19th century. This is particularly bad for the EU that, over decades, has been a project of the political elite. Today, Europe lacks leaders but, unfortunately, not populists.
Nevertheless, the EU is still important, he continued. Instead of trying to redistribute income, Europe can help to redistribute risks across countries, just as the common currency is a shield against global instability. The EU's soft power creates attraction in international system. However, these proposals were no panacea, he freely admitted, but needed popular support to bear fruit. Popular support is also vital in the current negotiations, not only at the end (when referenda may take place in Turkey and some member states) but also continuously during the talks. Before the issue of public opinion will be taken up in part 2.5, the actual process of negotiations and some pros and cons of membership will be looked at.

2.3 The accession negotiation process

The process of negotiating Turkey's EU membership has lasted for only a little more than two years; yet it has already experienced some major difficulties (or near-train crashes, as the

official jargon goes). This needs to be made clear in order to understand many of the frustrations prevalent on both sides at the moment.
Accession negotiations are led, on the Turkish side, with only objective, that is EU membership. The European Council acknowledged this when it stated that the shared objective of negotiations is accession, one speaker reiterated. Therefore, all talk of a privileged partnership was unproductive, another added. First and foremost, a different goal has been agreed. Second, a certain kind of privileged partnership already exists in the form of the customs union; the closest form of cooperation the EU has with a non-member. And thirdly, no one has ever defined what such a partnership would mean other than, *ex negativo*, not becoming a full member.
For the moment, one should let the process continue because the process matters more than end product, on Turkish speaker explained. The exclusive focus of the current discussions on membership simply frustrates both sides. This is also the lesson Turkey could learn from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, another added: "Forget about accession for the moment, and do your homework" – continue the reforms as if membership is the goal. If, in the end, both sides agreed to a civilised divergence from current path, this would be no problem, one speaker said, whereas the outright rejection of Turkey by the European Union would be a major disaster.
The actual negotiations so far have seen three phases of preparation: During the last year, the screening took place where the EU and Turkey together analysed the existing convergence between the country's legal system and the *acquis*, the EU's body of laws. The current year is marked by internal preparation, as seen in the passing of the road map. For the next year and with a new Turkish government, the beginning of full negotiations is expected, one speaker described. These negotiations were then conducted along five tracks, focusing on political standards, technical issues, civil society, financial cooperation, and the existing customs union.
Many speakers and participants alike referred to the perception that the EU treats Turkey differently than other candidate countries, despite the promises made in Helsinki in 1999. They stressed the fact that it was not a privilege but a right to become member of the European Union. Moreover, there seemed to be little pull for Turkey from the existing member states (like there was for the twelve latest entrants) and much more of Turkey's own push, someone involved in the negotiations bemoaned. However, this was exactly how accession negotiations work, another explained: As acceding country, you do not actually negotiate an outcome but the price you are willing to pay for achieving it.
Although speakers agreed that both Turkey and the EU were in for a long negotiation process, especially Turkish representatives stressed the importance of a potentially successful outcome. It is the perspective of membership that matters. In relation to this, not being given a date for eventual accession poses a considerable problem for Turkey. At least an indicative date was desirable to push through reforms internally. However, it is difficult for the EU to give such a date, one speaker elaborated, given the experience of fixed dates from the most recent accessions. Already now, some observers saw a slowdown in reforms following the opening of negotiations that cannot solely be attributed to the election year. In view of all this, it is important that the EU and Turkey keep the common basis of negotiations.

2.4 Costs and benefits of EU membership

In different discussions, participants and speakers tried to weigh the costs and benefits of Turkish membership in the EU, for both the Union and Turkey. In the following, the difficult task of summarising the main arguments from both camps is attempted.
Having Turkey as a member would bring certain benefits to the EU, one side argues: First, through the country's geostrategic location, it would increase the EU's soft power in a critical

region. Sharing a border with Iraq, Iran, and Syria will enhance the EU's understanding of some of the most important foreign policy issues. Turkey's membership would moreover heighten the EU's weight in the world by making it a more representative, inclusive entity (instead of a 'Christian club') by integrating a Muslim country. Despite Turkey being a non-Arab, secular country, its European fate is closely watched by the Arab world as the huge coverage by the Arab media of the opening of accession negotiations in 2004 showed. In addition, Turkey is seen as an example for far-away Muslim countries like Indonesia, at least in the eyes of politicians from Australia or New Zealand.

In geo-political (or geo-economic) terms, Turkish EU membership would mean better access to the energy sources of Russia and Central Asia. Turkey would bring military assets, including the second largest army of NATO, to add to the EU's foreign and security policy. In addition, the country is the main source for drinking water in Europe. Its market is big, young, and dynamic, promising a profitable extension of the already flourishing customs union. Finally, with its numerous young population, Turkey might counterbalance 'Old Europe's' demographic problems. Many of the political and economic advantages would also be Turkish side, of course: Belonging to the EU would enhance its political status, not only least within the region or vis-à-vis other Muslim countries. Given the economic effects visible so far, further modernisation is also seen as positive for both sides. The existing migratory pressure (estimates expect anything between 400,000 to 4,5 million people relocating each year to the EU after accession) might actually decrease until Turkey is a member.

With regard to the cost of Turkish membership in the EU, one obvious point of reference would be the actual EU budget. Turkey's GDP presently is around 20% of the EU average; while increasing the EU's population by 16%, its membership would only add 2,5% to the EU's GDP. Some estimates, therefore, figure an additional cost for the years 2014 to 2020 of 150 billion Euros, two thirds of which would be spent on Turkey (if present arrangements for structural and agricultural funds remain unchanged).

Such calculations, however, are the wrong approach, one speaker said. You simply cannot put a figure on the bill because too many variables are at play, including those working to Turkey's advantage. Another speaker recalled that, in the present arrangement, there is a 1% of GDP cap on payments (by the net contributors) and a 4% of GDP cap on transfers (on the receiving side). And indeed, the prospect of Turkish membership will greatly increase the pressure to rethink the EU's approach to cohesion funds and agricultural subsidies.

Which leads to the no less important question of the institutional impact that Turkish membership would have on the EU. Turkey is, with around 70 million inhabitants, already the second biggest state in Europe after Germany; by the time of membership, it may well be the most populous one, thus having at least the same number of votes in the Council and deputies in the Parliament as Germany. Given that Turkey does not have a history of European compromising, some observers expect the country to put a strain on decision-making, in particular in the intergovernmental foreign policy area. Here, not only would Turkey have a veto like all other member states but also would bring to the table a different foreign policy tradition and a specific regional interest including, as of yet, unsolved conflicts with the Armenian or Kurdish people.

These same points may also be seen as arguments against EU membership on the Turkish side. The cost of economic transformation is extremely high, and neither today nor in the future can EU funds offset them for Turkey. Especially on the social side, Turkey will have to deal with the effects of EU competition on large parts of a little educated and poor population. It would have to ask itself whether it could afford losing its young people to solve the West's demographic problem, one participant demanded.

It is therefore of no surprise that the discussion about the cost and benefits of membership becomes more critical in Turkey itself. In addition to the socio-economic reasons above, there

is a growing unwillingness among nationally oriented Turks, especially in the security sector, to give up power and sovereignty, one speaker reported. This transfer of competence, however, is the cornerstone of European integration. So what if Turkey does not want to go this far? Is the country "European" after all, both in the sense of integration readiness and cultural belonging?

Such latter questions of identity are the last and, probably, most weighty argument in favour of or against Turkish membership in the EU. In principle, this question was answered on the side of the EU by the 1999 decision of the heads of state and government to grant Turkey the candidate status – because only European countries can become members, as the Treaty on European Union stipulates. Yet, there is no denying that for some politicians, and for considerable parts of the population in some member states, this question is not yet satisfactorily solved. In France, this has even lead to a change of the constitution now obliging a popular referendum on every future accession (except the one of Croatia as negotiations with that country had already started when this new passage was introduced).

For Turkey, identification with Europe seems easier than the other way round, one speaker remarked. Turkey had had a European vocation even before the Republic was founded; already at the times of the Ottoman Empire, Europeanisation meant modernisation. Literally speaking, the Turks have always moved west ever since they left the Central Asian steppes, one speaker illustrated. As early as in 1963, this was recognised by the then President of the European Commission and German Christian Democrat, Walter Hallstein, when he famously said, on the occasion of the signing of the association agreement including the promise of future membership, "Turkey is part of Europe."

With regard to the "other" that might coerce Turkey and the European Union together, one speaker said, ironically, that he would regret that there is no enemy at hand to unite the two; they would have to find their own way of doing so. Another commented that it is dangerous to assume that positive identities need a negative identity against which they would construct themselves. He pointed to Karl Deutsch's "transaction identity" and the fact that the EU is built on such interaction, creating an identity over time. Thus, belonging to the Union, just like a marriage, allows you to argue from the same premises, not from different ones, one speaker thought.

Finally, with a view to the not so distant history, one speaker reminded the group that today's arguments against Turkish membership sounded similar to the arguments made against Spain and Portugal in the 1970s. They were fragile democracies recovering from military rule, too poor, too Catholic (today: too Muslim), one of them had an unsolved ETA (now: Kurdish) problem, and weren't they way too close to Northern Africa (or, for that matter, Central Asia and the Middle East) anyway? Today, nobody doubts the European credentials of these countries anymore.

While it was clear that some of the arguments (mainly those made against Turkey's entry into the EU) are based on a neat distinction between membership and non-membership, other arguments (many of those in favour of Turkey's EU bid) would also be valid if Turkey did not become a full member but were, nevertheless, closely integrated with the EU. Arguing in favour of an EU-Turkey wedding therefore needs courage and will, taking also into consideration whether the EU can afford losing Turkey, as one speaker put it (i.e. the "cost of non-Turkey"). Whether or not European leaders will muster the political will to bring Turkish membership about, will largely depend on the image of Turkey in the EU, thus on the public opinion in the member states.

2.5 Public opinion in Turkey and the EU

Public opinion on accession has played an increasing role in recent years, both in the EU – where an "enlargement fatigue" is said to have taken hold, not solely directed towards Turkey

– and in Turkey itself. One speaker identified what he called a "double gap:" In the EU, the public does not know much about Turkey but still holds strong views on it, whereas the Turkish public often does not see the EU as it is. Given the study group's presence in the country, the latter point figured more prominently in their discussions.
In a more general observation, one speaker analysed the influence of public opinion on the political leadership in Turkey. Twenty or even ten years ago, it hardly had any influence; now, it is starting to shape policies, including even foreign policy. One major issue has been the American policy in the Middle East, giving rise to an anti-Americanism hitherto unheard of. The other affect has been the decline in support for EU membership (down from 70 to 30 per cent in only a few years), which some speakers described as a reaction to the renewed debate in the EU calling Turkish accession into question. Other speakers saw this more as an unfortunate but normal phenomenon in acceding countries.
In fact, there are many anti-EU tendencies in Turkey, one speaker conceded, but he would not call them a real movement. One rumour, for example, that does not want to fade is the idea that the EU intends to partition the country. This idea draws on the EU's insistence on reconciliation with neighbouring countries and protection of minority rights. Another point of contention is the fact that the European Commission monitors the human rights situation in candidate countries but not in the member states. Of course, people from the member states might say, this is what we have the rule of law and our court systems for; yet, parts of the Turkish public exploit this as unfair double standards on the side of the EU. Then again, some people in the EU seem to think that EU-Turkey relations started only five years ago, whereas Turks are looking at more than four decades of a mixed relationship.
These examples serve to highlight the enormous challenges to overcome ignorance, fear, and prejudice on both sides. Some were hoping that, over time and with more tourist and student exchanges, awareness of the benefits of Turkish EU membership would grow on both sides. Others proposed a more active approach: A focused communication strategy should do what is necessary: "explain, explain, explain" – Turkey to the EU and vice versa. Already the number of journalists travelling to Turkey upon invitation from the Commission increased from ten to fifty each year, thus contributing to a more informed picture of Turkey in European media. Another proposal saw the source of improvement in the Muslim minority in Member States like Germany and France. Achieving genuine integration of these groups should therefore be seen as part of what the EU has to do, in addition to the well-known institutional reforms, in order to prepare for Turkish membership.

2.6 Turkey-U.S. relations

Next to the European Union, the United States as the other long-standing partner received considerable attention by the group, not least because it plays an important role in two of Turkey's main objectives: EU accession and regional security. On the former, the U.S. has been a strong supporter of Turkish membership, even to the point where this annoyed European policy-makers rebuking that they would not propose to the U.S. to accept Mexico as the 51st state. On the latter, it is mainly the war in Iraq that has contributed to a cooling off between Turkey and America, not only among the public (as mentioned above) but also in the political elite.
These differences, however, should not damage the long history of good American-Turkish relations, one speaker said. Exactly 60 years ago, she continued, the Truman Doctrine of 1947 pledged U.S. economic and military support to Turkey (and Greece) to defend these countries against Soviet expansion. Moreover, the United States was a strong supporter of Turkey's entry into NATO in 1952.
Both American and Turkish speakers described the relation today as a strong partnership between long-standing allies, especially on larger goals: One speaker identified an overlap of

seven to eight among each country's top ten foreign policy priorities. This, he carried on, enables the two countries to cooperate well on regional issues such as Lebanon, despite the difficulties with Iraq invasion. One speaker nicely summed up the qualitative change of the relationship by saying that, during the Cold War, Turkey mattered for *where* it was; today, it matters for *what* it is: a successful democracy in a volatile region.

3 The Wider Region

It is the neighbourhood of Turkey, stretching from a Black Sea neighbour like Ukraine and the countries of the South Caucasus over Iran and Iraq to Syria, which has recently drawn more attention in the capitals of Europe and, to the extent that this had not already been the case, in Washington too. Depending on one's viewpoint, the country's location is either seen as a source of instability, by importing conflicts from the neighbouring countries, or as a source of influence, for example with regard to securing energy supply from these countries. It is therefore instructive to, first, take a look at Turkish foreign policy before making assumptions about the broader region.

3.1 Turkey's Foreign Policy

The most important notion of Turkish foreign policy, a principle already established by the Republic's founder Atatürk, is 'peace at home, peace in the world.' Atatürk, one speaker explained, saw the two intrinsically related to each other. Consequently, a continuous aspect of Turkey's policy has been to link the domestic and the international situation, as they are interdependent.

Looking at the history of his country's foreign policy, one speaker distinguished three different periods of peaceful change. The first period lasted from after World War II to 1970 and could be called Westernisation. During this time, Turkey became part of the Western world: It was a founding member of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an early member of the Council of Europe, and later joined NATO. Turkey's regional policy during the Cold War was mainly defined by the common Western stance, and there was compatibility between Westernisation and the internal democratisation of the country.

The next period, dating from 1970 to 1989, was more turbulent, displaying frictions in the implementation of a Westernisation policy. A general divergence of EU and U.S. policies made it more difficult for Turkey to align its policies; it therefore started to look for alternatives, conducting a more autonomous regional policy. The Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 1974 might be seen in this light, one speaker reckoned. Moreover – and unfortunately so, he said – Turkey started to diverge from its path of democratisation during these years – in stark contrast to countries like Greece, Spain, and Portugal.

Finally, the current post-Cold War period has seen Westernisation turning into Europeanisation. Due to increasing frictions with the United States about its Middle East policy, Turkey increasingly turned to the EU. In the past five years alone, Turkish alignment with EU policies and declarations at the United Nations rose from 80% (2002) to 95% (2007). Along with this change of direction came a change of style, one speaker noted: Turkey has been increasingly looking for non-zero-sum solutions in a multilateral setting. He saw Turkey becoming a soft power, developing from a Cold War frontier state to one caring about good neighbourly relations in all directions, with Greece and Bulgaria as well as with Iran and Syria. Even with regard to the thorny issue of a divided Cyprus, one speaker detected a dramatic shift with Turkey now focusing on a solution rather than on the status quo.

According to one speaker, the non-recognition of the (Greek) Republic of Cyprus is one of the most important limitations to process of Turkey's Europeanisation. At the same time, he thought it is impossible for Turkey to recognise Cyprus prior to a settlement of the conflict. Others, too, regarded the matter as a stumble block on the way to Europe but did not expect any solution before 2008, as compromises are difficult in an election year. The fact that the EU itself does not have a policy on the Cyprus conflict does not help the matter either. One speaker clearly put the blame on the Europeans saying that it had been a mistake to admit Cyprus as a member because this violated the EU's principles (according to which all members should have settled their border disputes). Now, Turkey is requested to correct this mistake, he complained.
In more general terms, another speaker pointed to a historical irony: The EU integration process is meant to contain and, eventually, overcome nationalism. In the Eastern Mediterranean, however, it seems to foster it.

3.2 European neighbourhood policy and the Middle East

The European neighbourhood policy (ENP) provides a common policy framework for the EU's neighbouring states, from Ukraine and Belarus over Georgia and Israel to Libya and Morocco. While, of course, all states are different, and demand – and deserve – individual policies, the EU lumped them together under one policy roof geared towards its objective of building a "ring of well-governed countries" around it. By establishing close contractual relations with these countries, the Union follows a "modernisation without accession" approach, as EU membership is not on the table for them at the moment.
Many of the said countries are equally in Turkey's neighbourhood, one speaker remarked, so it is deplorable that the country is not more involved in ENP. One the one hand, such an involvement would create more internal stability in Turkey, whereas on the other, Turkey could also contribute more to the EU policies. As a candidate country, Turkey would see itself definitely not as a target of ENP but as contributor to it, as partner in it, another speaker said. By establishing more links with its neighbours, it wants to contribute to European integration as whole.
The Black Sea region is one of most critical for the EU, yet there is a cost of getting involved there without Turkey. The same is true for the EU's upcoming Central Asia strategy. The bloc has a keen interest in this Islamic region concerning, among others, energy supply and political stability; but leaving Turkey out of this approach is simply not wise. Unfortunately, one speaker said, not enough decision-makers in the EU see the positive role Turkey could play but take the country more as a consumer than a producer of stability.
If Turkey's Middle Eastern policy does not appear helpful at present, this has to do with an unclear EU policy on many such issues, one speaker argued. It would be easier if Turkey's two partners agreed broadly so the country could follow. Yet, the current U.S. military policy in the Middle East has produced a rift with Turkey, one speaker explained, and in response the government feels that its position as ally is weakening in DC. Turkey, for example, favours the territorial integrity of Iraq, yet its leadership is unsure what the EU and the U.S. really want. More specifically, Turkey has kept good relations with Israel even under the current AKP government, but it cannot cultivate these due to public opinion, one speaker explained.
Whether or not Turkey could be a role model for Muslim democracy was another question debated by the group. Some said that it could never be such a model for Islamic countries, as most of these have not had the long history of democratisation and secularisation that Turkey has. Others were more optimistic though careful about the wording: Without being a model, it would nevertheless set an example of a more democratic and stable country, producing a line of thinking like "if the Turks achieve it, we Arabs might do so too." Still another speaker said

that, even if others need not copy the Turkish system, the country is still key to promoting democracy in the wider region. All these points made it clear that, by simple geographical necessity, Turkey and the EU will have to work together in the region, whether Turkey is an acceding country, a full member, or any kind of close partner.

4 Conclusion

The group ended its discussion with a commentary on the current political state of affairs in the wake of the military intervention the night before. Two weeks later, at the time of the writing of this report, the situation may be less tense than on that day but is by no means solved.

In a way, the meeting of the study group way symptomatic: Five days of constructive and hopeful talks in both the state capital Ankara and the business and cultural hub Istanbul delivered an instructive picture of how enormously far Turkey has already advanced on its way of Europeanisation. Yet, on the very last day, the military – which went suspiciously unnoticed during most of the talks before – was back, and with a vengeance.

What is it the EU could do in this situation? It should stand by all those who want genuine democracy in Turkey, avoiding both an Islamisation and a militarist-secularist backlash, some participants said. In particular, it should promote a new electoral system that provides real checks and balances and pays better respect to all social groups in the country. Turkey appears to be a polarised and divided society. People are lacking trust in the political system that is run by bankrupt parties, one participant regretted. As one cynical saying goes: "First privatise the private sector, then democratise the democrats." Events showed that the latter process is still on its way.

The new self-confidence based on the recent economic boom and the beginning of EU negotiations, is weakened after the election debacle. While one speaker deplored the Turkish ability to shoot itself in the foot, the whole week was like a rollercoaster ride to an outsider, as it was remarked. Maybe there is an implicit answer to one of the questions that did not get an explicit response during the conference: "What are the reasons why Turkey itself wants to become a member of the European Union?" To save the country from itself… After all, this would not be the worst motivation, and it has certainly been the case even for some of the founding member states.