Turkey's Delta Paradox[I]

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TURKISH POLITICS AND CULTURE DEFY CATEGORIZATION. Instead, descriptive efforts that try to capture Turkey's unique place rely on binary oppositions. The most clichéd of these is that Turkey stands with one foot in the West and one in the East—a literal and proverbial bridge between the disparate gaps that separate the "uptown" that is Europe from "the projects" of the Middle East. Kemal Kirişçi of Bosphorus University defines Turkey's oppositional identities in philosophical terms, as sitting "right on the fault line between Europe's 'Kantian' world and the 'Hobbesian' one of the Middle East."[1]

At the core of these depictions lies a complex notion of Turkish identity championed and codified by the founder of the modern Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the 'Father of the Turks.' In his modernization project, Atatürk borrowed heavily from European institutional practices—a dramatic separation of religion and state and the introduction of secular nationalism through a reformed educational system. Additionally, he worked hard to form a national culture divorced from the heritage of the Ottoman Empire. His language reform abolished the Arabic alphabet and replaced it with a Latin one, while his dress code reform gave the Turkish people a more Western appearance. In his effort to consolidate Turkish national identity, he promoted a unitary ethnic identity for the Turkish state defined by citizenship. The Kemalist notion of Turkish identity, a difficult concept to define in simple terms, includes at its core nationalism, unitarianism, secularism, and a Westward orientation.

Over the years, different actors of the Turkish polity, including Islamists, ethnic minorities, communists and others, have challenged Kemalism. Two recent significant developments—Turkey's accession process to the European Union and the United States' intervention in Iraq—have the

combined effect of emboldening elements in Turkey that challenge the foundational principles of the republic, while simultaneously facilitating the challengers' political activity. Historically, the secular and unitary identities of the state have been contested primarily by the rise of political Islam and Kurdish nationalism. These challenges have been accentuated by the EU reform process and the war in Iraq; European Union reforms open Turkey's political environment and encourage a dissonant public sphere, while the war in Iraq further consolidates Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq, which has had serious effects on Turkey's domestic understanding of its own "Kurdish problem." The demands of the integration process with Europe and the Iraq intervention have opened up Pandora's Box, releasing the dormant tensions of Turkey's identity.[2]

Change is inherently an unstable process, and the path towards European integration will undoubtedly necessitate expansive transformations in Turkey. The question facing Turkey and all interested parties is how to mitigate the potentially detrimental aspects of this change. How do you continue to encourage freedom of expression without allowing Islamic radicalism to undermine democracy? How do you accept self-identification while retaining the concept of common identity and social cohesion? How do you align the military with democratic principles while still ensuring its ability to confront terrorism and separatism and assuring national security at a time of radical change? Democracy, by fostering a dissonant political environment, complicates the reform process and offers challenges which were largely muted during Atatürk's authoritarian modernization project.

The delta paradox (paradox of change) is a conceptual framework that notes the fundamental principles of the Turkish state; captures the historical challenges to these principles in their unique, contemporary setting; and highlights how developments in this milieu, if mishandled, can create unintended consequences. The reform process geared towards EU accession, coupled with the repercussions of the US intervention in Iraq, will un-doubtedly expose the country's deep fault lines and, in turn, challenge the fundamental conceptual innovations of the modern republic: secularism and the unitary structure of the state. Unless the most destabilizing manifestations of change in Turkey, namely ethnic and religious fragmentation, are mitigated, the march towards Europe will paradoxically lead Turkey away from its Western orientation. The key tasks are to manage the inherent risks and opportunities of reform and to avoid potentially unsavory developments. The delta paradox offers a conceptual framework that is vital for understanding Turkey's contemporary political reality.

The delta paradox rests on two major developments in Turkey. The first is

the historic October 3, 2005 decision by the European Council, the highest governing body of the EU, to open up membership negotiations with Turkey following the European Commission's determination that Turkey sufficiently met the Copenhagen Criteria (the rules that define whether a nation is eligible to join the EU). Turkey applied for associate membership in the European Economic Community in 1959. After many years of disappointment and tension, the 1999 Helsinki Summit granted Turkey candidate status. The 2002 election of the moderate Islamic and pro-EU Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP*) further accelerated the integration process.

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The pace of reforms has been criticized by some as disproportionate and disingenuous.[3] "Euroskeptics" claim that EU focused reforms have created a freer and secure environment for Islamists and separatists to pursue their aims. At the same time that the EU process has sparked debate within Turkey about the implications of the reforms demanded in the *acquis*, the thirty-five chapters of EU law that serve as the basis for EU membership, Europe is being drawn into a serious discussion about the future of its union and identity. These concurrent identity crises are mutually perpetuating and accentuating. Turkey's public debate feeds European paranoia while a contentious debate about European identity continues to raise questions in Turkey about whether it will ever truly be considered "European."

The second development that contributes to this paradox is the US intervention in Iraq. Before the intervention, the Turkish military predicted the undesirable scenario that unfolded once Saddam Hussein's regime fell. On all accounts this scenario became a reality. The resulting regional instability, the fierce insurgency, the maladroit administration of the occupation, and the increased autonomy and influence of the Kurds in the north are hostile to Turkey's national interests.[4] As Ambassador Murat Bilhan of the Center for Strategic Research in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained, "When there is a fire in Iraq, Turkey feels the heat."[5] Regional instability complicates Turkey's "zero problem policy" with its neighbors and regional allies, while further straining relations with the United States.[6] The "zero problem" policy, akin to Atatürk's "Peace at Home, Peace in the World" strategy, seeks

to minimize conflicts with Turkey's neighbors.[7] Furthermore, the *defacto* autonomy of the Kurds in northern Iraq presents unique challenges to Turkey, both in terms of the actions of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Kurdish terrorist group, and the emboldened nationalism of Kurds in Turkey. Together, the quest for Union membership and the developments in northern Iraq accentuate the difficult shifts in Turkish society.

The Challenge to Turkey's Secular Establishment

Secularism is one of the founding principles of the Turkish state and its Kemalist establishment. Atatürk sought to replace the Ottoman adherence to *Shari'ah* laws and divine rule with a system based on science and the rule of the people. This, he believed, was an imperative element in Turkey's westward advance. Although it has much in common with French *laïcité*, the Turkish secular model differs in some important ways. Both models are similar in that they vary from the British approach by stressing that the state ought to be indifferent to any religion, as opposed to taking equal distance from all faiths. Additionally, the French and Turkish paradigms stress that in an effort to create a neutral public space, free of religious discrimination and capable of sustaining a democratic environment, religion should be kept to the private sphere and out of government. Turkey diverges from the French model in that it seeks to regulate religious institutions. The Turkish system, in other words, is not a separation of religion and state, but rather the state controlling the religion. Through the Presidency of Religious Affairs, the government manages and oversees theological schools, pays the salaries of the imams, and thus monitors weekly sermons for any hint of radical ideology and political content.

Turkish secularism has been challenged for nearly half a century by the rise of political Islam. The Virtue Party Movement, which started as a political organization in 1969, presented the first major Islamic challenge to the modern republic. The Movement was critical of the West, and of Turkey's alliances with it. Instead, it advocated closer cooperation with the Islamic world. The Islamic elements in the Turkish polity have continued to polarize the political realm. Today they criticize what they perceive to be the establishment's exclusionary notion of Turkish secularism, one that leaves little room for sub-identities and self-identification.

In 1996, for the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic, an Islamist-led government was elected to power. Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party (*Refah*) received almost 22 percent of the votes in the general elections. Erbakan served as Prime Minister in a tenuous coalition government with the

center-right True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi* - DYP) until June 18th 1997, when the secular military, through the Turkish National Security Council, forced him to resign in the face of public outcry over his Islamist agenda. The Welfare Party was closed down in less than a year, and Mr. Erbakan was banned from politics for five years. The Welfare Party's successor, the Virtue Party (*Fazilet*), was closed down by the Constitutional Court in 2001 for undermining the secular nature of the state. This resulted in the creation of two successor parties, namely the Felicity Party (*Saadet*) and the aforementioned Justice and Development Party, which won the elections in 2002 and remains in power to this day.

The Islamists object to the Turkish state's exclusion of Islamic laws and values in its institutions. They believe that Islam should inform the behavior of all devoted Muslims in every aspect of their lives, including politics. Therefore, the Islamists argue that secularism undermines religion and that this modern and western conception promotes infidelity. Islamists have typically offered two approaches to overhaul the secular democratic system with one that is *Shariah*-based. The first approach, an Islamic revolution, has never gained much credence, especially under the shadow of Turkey's powerful secular military. The second method calls for Islamic parties to use democracy as a means to come into positions of influence where they can then pursue their goal of an Islamic state.

The fear of the Kemalist establishment and proponents of secularism in Turkey is that the EU reform process is facilitating the latter approach. By calling for increased room for the expression of religion, and in turn organized religious movements and parties, the EU process provides an auspicious environment for the rise of political Islam in Turkey. As Zeyno Baran, director of International Security and Energy Programs at the Nixon Center, testified before of the House Armed Services Committee, "For decades, radicals have taken advantage of the legal and societal openness of Western Europe to strengthen their organizations and spread their ideas—and furthermore to export radical ideas and radical activities to Muslim lands."[8] The secular establishment is therefore suspicious of the claim that the AKP has reformed from its radical origins. It holds that rather than pursuing an honest reform agenda along the lines of traditional political culture and principles, they are using reform to push through their own interests and religious agenda.

In her article, "Fighting the War of Ideas," Baran states, "Paradoxically, as Turkey is reforming its legal and constitutional systems to boost its chances of joining the EU, it is becoming increasingly vulnerable to domestic Islamist extremists, partly because some of the measures traditionally used

to keep radicals in check are being abolished."[10] With this line of thinking, organizations such as the transnational Sunni radical Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), or Islamic Party of Liberation, will find it easier to express themselves and to participate in the democratic process. HT is not a terrorist organization in and of itself. However it is said to be a "conveyor belt for terrorists" that promotes hateful ideology and creates a global network of radicals that stand in stark opposition to the values and principles of secular countries like Turkey. Indeed, Baran says, "HT is beginning to convince Muslims that their primary identity stems from (and that their primary loyalty is owed to) religion rather than race, ethnicity, or nationality."[10]

Religious radicals, however, do not offer the only challenge to Turkish secularism. Liberal factions in Turkey suggest that Turkish secularism is a limiting factor to freedom of expression and the right to education. The headscarf issue is the most problematic and controversial manifestation of this debate. The ban on headscarves in public institutions is viewed as a violation of women's rights to access education and to participate in public affairs. Additionally, it is deemed a violation of human rights since the prohibition is seen as a limit to the freedom of expression and the practice of one's faith. Moreover, one can argue that policies such as banning the headscarf as well as any other religious symbol from the public sphere alienate moderate Islamists, further polarizing the body politik. The EU accession process challenges Turkey to balance the benefit of increasing civil liberties with the dangers inherent in loosening its secular model.

The headscarf debate has overshadowed some of the more nuanced advantages of secularism. Secularism is meant to create and preserve a neutral public space in which any sort of religious discrimination is minimized. Moreover, secular laws provide a powerful basis for a well-established democracy by taking the threat of religious radicals out of the political scheme and therefore guaranteeing

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that there will be no return of a *Shariah*-based order. Former Ambassador Gündüz Aktan, a columnist for the daily *Radikal*, argues that democracy is impossible in a non-secularized Islamic country.[11] Contrary to the assertion that the secular system represses individual rights, secular laws guarantee

gender equality in Muslim societies by ensuring that repressive *Shariah* laws are excluded from the legal domain. As former President of the Republic Süleyman Demirel argues, "Indeed, the strength of secularism in Turkey is best illustrated by the new social status of women and their new role in the public sphere. Secularism emancipated women from ancient and outdated practices and eliminated the segregation of genders. Participation of women in social and public life as full fledged citizens determines the distinct features of the modern secular way of life."[12]

The EU accession process does not require Turkey to abandon its secularist model. Yet some of the results of the process are unnerving. In an effort to meet the Copenhagen Criteria, the Turkish government passed the First Harmonization Package, a law consisting of a collection of amendments to different domestic laws. Part of this package, effective February 19, 2002, repealed a provision prohibiting the establishment of an association, "to protect… and claim that there are minorities based on racial, religious, sectarian, cultural, or linguistic differences."[13] Easing restrictions of this kind feeds the fears of the secular elites, while at the same time emboldening Islamic elements. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) recently dropped the case of Leyla Şahin, who protested the ban on headscarves in Turkey. Rather than applauding the Court for accepting his government's position, Prime Minister Erdoğan criticized the decision on the grounds that it went beyond its jurisdiction in ruling on a religious matter that ought to be decided by the Islamic scholars, the *ulama*. In 2004, Erdoğan pushed a law through Parliament which opened up the public secondary education system to graduates of state-run religious high schools that train imams and preachers. Islamic elements, which are more Islamist than the AKP, have been pushing for social reforms such as the banning of alcohol in some towns. The European project does not spell the death knell of Turkish secularism. However, ignoring the fragility of the process and dismissing the plausibility of negative outcomes, might.

The Challenges to Turkey's Unitary State

The identity of the Turkish state is a product of an ongoing debate that began with the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The first approach, in line with the intensive period of Ottoman reformist activity (the *Tanzimat*, or "reorganization"), sought a Turkish identity defined by citizenship. The second approach advocated that Islam should form the basis of the new Turkey, while the third way sought an ethnic and cultural basis for the new republic that was grounded in "Turkishness". The latter won out and was

championed by Atatürk in an effort to create the kind of national identity and common purpose necessary for his massive modernization project.

Not all groups acquiesced to this approach. Atatürk's efforts to forge a uniform Turkish national identity left little room for cultural pluralism.[14] The Kurdish issue illustrates the point well. In 1925, a widespread Kurdish rebellion broke out and lasted for several months. Unwilling to acknowledge their ethnic and cultural distinctiveness, especially at such an early stage in the consolidation of the republic, the state crushed the rebellion and its leaders were executed. The Kurdish uprising in the mid-1980s was similarly conceived as a direct threat to the legitimacy of the Turkish nation and its territorial integrity.

The Turks are still consumed with the "Sevrès Syndrome," the fear that the external world is conspiring to weaken and partition Turkey.[15] This feeling is a result of the total dismantling of the Turkish state by the great powers after the First World War. The fear that once again external actors and Turkey's many neighbors will try to remake the borders of the Republic still informs Turkey's foreign policy. In part due to this historical heritage, the state continued to view the hostilities in the predominantly Kurdish-populated southeast through a security lens that has diagnosed the problem as separatist terrorism led by the PKK rather than a "Kurdish problem." This reflects the historical rejection of multicultural notions of Turkish identity. The more ambitious aspiration of some Kurds for a federalist solution, or in the extreme case, an independent Kurdish state, continues to constitute red lines for the Turkish government since it undermines the unitary state and territorial integrity of Turkey.

The EU reform process has centered its demands on this most sensitive issue by pressing Turkey to open up room for the expression of distinct ethnic and cultural identities in Turkey. This includes the legalization of the Kurdish language in publications and the media, as well as in educational institutions. Reform-minded elements in the establishment, noting that reformism is one of the principles of Kemalism, acknowledged this reality and called for a reinterpretation of Kemalism. An increasing number of individuals in Turkish society came to see the unitary approach as exclusive, homogenous, and one that stifles social pluralism—whether towards expression of religious identity or ethnic sub-identities in the public sphere. The limited expressions of popular identities, they claimed, only polarized Turkish politics. Erdoğan, in a visit to southeastern Turkey last winter, defined citizenship in the Turkish Republic as a supra-identity that does not exclude or discriminate against ethnic sub-identities. Thus, the struggle continues over how to allow for and promote expression of distinctiveness

without leading to the kind of fragmentation and identity politics Atatürk worked so hard to avoid.

Northern Iraq and the Kurdish Issue

Turkey's changing attitude about Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq has in turn led to a revision of its approach to its domestic Kurdish population. For many years, the emergence of a uniform Kurdish-dominated entity in northern Iraq was a red line for Turkish foreign policy. With control of oil-rich Kirkuk and a strong militia, a Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq would pose a significant threat to Turkey since it would ostensibly challenge its legitimacy at home and threaten its territorial integrity. Unintentionally, the war in Iraq and the ensuing fragmentation of the state has greatly enhanced the chances for the emergence of such an entity in northern Iraq.

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In the aftermath of the 2003 US intervention, Turkey has revised its traditional approach. This is due to a reassessment of the threat posed by an autonomous Kurdish entity in northern Iraq and a sober assessment of Turkey's capacity to oppose this development. An autonomous entity in Iraq is no longer perceived to be a vital threat to Turkey's interests. Mesud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, two stalwarts of the Kurdish political parties in Iraq, are no longer seen as tribal leaders looking for a "grand Kurdish" solution. Instead, in their capacity as representatives of the Iraqi state, they are pursuing more modest goals within the framework of Iraqi federalism. Additionally, some have argued that the PKK has moderated its goals from federalism and separatism to integration with Turkey through increased human rights and political freedoms. Ironically, some observers of Kurdish politics suggest that the PKK has emerged as the most moderate voice and the one that Turkey should engage.[16] Dr. Soner Çağaptay, a senior fellow and director of The Washington Institute's Turkish Research Program, strongly opposes this interpretation. In his eyes, "The PKK is steeped in a culture of violence and will not commit itself to peace."[17] The United States has gone to some lengths to stress to both the Iraqi Kurds and the Turks that it has no intention of encouraging the emergence of an independent Kurdistan, but rather its goals are for a unified, democratic Iraq. Ankara sought guarantees against a federal reality in Iraq, but the United States refused to make such a promise because it

claimed that Iraq ought to choose the course that it deems best for itself.

Furthermore, a reading of statements by the Turkish Chief of Staff and Turkey's National Security Council suggest that Turkey has resigned itself to the fact that there is little it can do to thwart Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq.[18] Although it presents potentially formidable challenges to Turkey's national security, especially if the Iraqi Kurds try to ferment separatist elements among Turkey's Kurds, an incursion into northern Iraq is not a viable option for Turkey. Turkey is getting used to a Kurdish presence in northern Iraq and has concluded that the best way to address its domestic Kurdish problem is by forging relations with the Kurds in Iraq. Sezgin Tanrıkulu, president of the Diyarbakır Bar Association, argues, "The Kurdish attitude and sentiment in Turkey towards a federalist or a separatist solution will depend on [the] Turkish state's attitude towards the Kurds."[19]

Here the EU process and the Iraq war intertwine further. According to Tanrıkulu, the majority of Turkey's Kurds claim that their best option is to remain in a Turkey that is a member of the EU. Although the EU will not solve all their problems, many Kurds believe that EU membership will facilitate the Kurds' wishes to express their aspirations more openly.[20] However, if as many predict, Turkey is not admitted to the EU, what are the implications for the unitary state? While some suggest that the reforms will continue, others suggest that they are contingent on membership to the Union.[21] This leaves the fate of the Kurds and the Turkish state dependent on Turkey's ability to create conditions that encourage the Kurds to remain a part of Turkey regardless of accession. The return of sporadic and low-level violence in the southeast in the winter of 2005 suggests that some Kurdish elements will try to take advantage of Turkey's reforms and the European Union's scrutiny of the Turkish armed forces to return to armed confrontation. Furthermore, greater expression of Kurdish demands and their emboldened spirit and operational capacity post-US intervention in Iraq, combined with the reform of the Turkish military, suggest that if the situation is mishandled, a return to the violent affairs of the early 1990s is not out of the question. As part of its EU reform requirements, Turkey has civilianized its National Security Council. In 2003 it amended Article 15 in the Law on the National Security Council and the Secretary General of the Security Council to revise the appointment procedure for the Secretary General of the Council. The changes decreed that the Secretary General would no longer be appointed by the military, but rather by the Prime Minister with the approval of the President, thereby allowing a civilian to serve in this office.

An anti-paradox argument counters the delta paradox in two ways. First, this argument suggests that without democracy and pluralism, separatism

and Islamic fundamentalism will become increasingly attractive to repressed minorities. Dialogue and public debate are the best mechanisms to safeguard against these challenges and the best means to achieve a unifying consensus on national identity. The exaggerated threat of Islamic extremism is used by those who seek to maintain the status quo, when in fact polls suggest that the popularity of the AKP and its predecessor, the Welfare Party, rest not so much on their Islamic agenda, but rather as a reaction to the corrupt and unsuccessful policies of other political parties. The Islamist parties that are more conservative than the AKP failed to approach anything close to the ten percent threshold for parliamentary representation. Furthermore, regardless of the supposed intentions that the Islamists have for Turkey, the very nature of the European Union and its various institutions will provide checks on radicalism and prevent any future government from becoming radicalized.

Second, the reform process has led to a miraculous synthesis of modernity and Islam, what some have termed "Islamic Calvinism".[22] This "Turkish Delight"—Graham Fuller's term for Turkey's liberal form of Islam—undermines the view shared by the secular Republican elite that economic development and modernization are only possible by moving away from religion. Islam in Turkey is liberal, pro-Western, Europhile, and pro-capitalist.[23] Islamic Calvinism has given birth to "Anatolian Tigers"—cities in Turkey's Anatolian region that embrace both conservative Islamic social norms and pro-capitalist ones. Cities such as Kayseri offer what some argue will be the future model for Turkey—firmly anchored in the West, but also embracing its other identities. The anti-paradox school would suggest that, if anything, the reform process has produced moderating effects that make the threat of Islamic fundamentalism and separatism far less tangible.

While it is generally true that Turkey could benefit from a national dialogue about the relevance of the founding principles of the Republic in the new age, the assumption that this process comes without any risks is naïve. The supposition of those who adhere to the anti-paradox line of thinking–that all parties seek to reinforce consolidation rather than encourage fragmentation –is highly optimistic. The argument that political Islam in Turkey has been reborn runs up against those elements that continue to push for *Shariah*, the banning of alcohol, and other reactionary policies that seem to receive the tacit approval of the sitting government. Similarly, it is naïve to presuppose that a freer debate and a reformed military will not face significant separatist opposition.

Turkey, the European Union, the United States, and other actors can take important measures to mitigate the negative effects of the reform process. The most important step is to recognize this model's vulnerability. The reforms and examples cited in this essay touch on the fundamental essence of the Turkish state. The majority of Turks are well aware of the dangers they are exposed to when undertaking the reform process. Nevertheless, polls suggest that most Turks are determined to carry through with this process.

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The EU should ease its rhetoric and suffocating scrutiny of Turkey. In an effort to encourage Turkey to continue down the fragile path of reform, the EU tends to comment and counsel Turkey in a derogatory fashion. This negative approach only strengthens the nationalist and Euroskeptic parties. The reform process will receive renewed strength, especially with some of the more controversial reforms ahead, if there are some assurances that Turkey will become an EU member when it fulfills the criteria for accession. Europe must ensure that its "expansion fatigue" does not result in intellectual laxity that might lead to missed opportunities to engage Turkey in the negotiation process.

Second, Turkey must do a far better job of informing its public about the EU accession process. The ignorance of the workings of the integration process, like the unconstructive rhetoric that often comes from Brussels, only serves to strengthen those elements opposed to integration in the first place. Among applicant countries, Turkey is ranked lowest in terms of the public's perceived level of knowledge about the EU.[24] One way to get the masses on board is to frame the reform process as organic, driven by the assumption that the reforms are good for Turkey regardless of EU membership. It is in the best interest of Turkey, for example, to legalize its economy, to achieve political stability that will allow for the flow of foreign direct investment, and to harness a national identity that capitalizes on its diverse ethnic identities. This will aid Turkey's image problem in Europe. Turkish leaders should also recognize that their audience is never limited exclusively to the Turkish public. When Erdoğan speaks, he speaks to Europe as well. By speaking to Europe,

and to the rest of the world, he will go a long way towards undermining those who suggest Turkey is unprepared to join the "European Club".

In regard to the Kurdish issue, the US can help ease fears of the security establishment by collaborating more actively with Turkish armed forces against the PKK's presence in northern Iraq. Though tied down with the Sunni insurgency and Al-Qaeda in Iraq, the US must continue to engage in a dialogue with the Turkish government on this issue without alienating the Kurds, the closest thing the US has to an ally in Iraq. Similarly, the EU ought to take a more active role in moderating Kurdish nationalism and helping to guarantee an equitable distribution of Iraq's oil reserves.

European Union reforms in Turkey cannot be implemented without the consent of the Turkish military. The military establishment is fully committed to the EU accession process because it recognizes that it could provide the best solutions to the principle problems plaguing Turkish national security. However, Turkey will need to remain vigilant during the most unstable periods of change to deter those who seek to hijack reforms for their own political agendas. As Ersel Aydınlı and his co-authors argue in the January/February 2006 volume of *Foreign Affairs*:

> If Kurdish separatists, failing to see a future for themselves in a European Turkey, continue to resort to violence, the Turkish military might hang on to its remaining prerogatives in the name of national security. Should the Islamists begin to fill in the gaps in state institutions created by the military's retreat, the Turkish General Staff could decide to cling on to its power.

According to the authors, "Seeing that Turkey's military can still project national confidence during a time of radical change will ease the final stage of the country's historic journey toward modernization."[25]

Conclusion

Turkey is the frontline in the ideological battle against the global networks of Islamic radicalism. If energies of well-meaning states are focused on the conflagrations in the Gulf arena at the expense of Turkey, terrorism—whether of an Islamic extremist or ethnic separatist bent—will increase. However, if regional and international actors work to help Turkey manage its transformation, they will have scored a major victory in the global counterterrorism effort for two reasons. First, Turkey's success will serve as an ideological anathema to Hizb ut-Tahrir and its cohorts, both in the

Middle East and in Europe, the new battleground in the war against Al-Qaeda. In the Middle East, it will inspire other regional players to create their own organic reform movements that seek to consolidate the gains of modernization and democracy without endangering national unity or opening the door for religious radicalism. In Europe, it will go a long way towards helping integrate and moderate Europe's ever-increasing Muslim community and, in turn, soften Europe's identity crisis.

Second, a well managed reform process will lower the appeal of Kurdish separatists and militant groups. This will assuage domestic concerns about Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq, which will greatly assist efforts to pacify the country in the near future and to thwart the insurgency and international terrorist elements operating in the country.

If Turkey truly aspires to be a member of the EU, it cannot avoid necessary and potentially destabilizing reforms. Some of these reforms will require national self-reflection on the founding principles of the Republic. The convergence of Islamist and separatist threats to Turkey are not separate phenomena, but rather inter-related elements that serve to amplify Turkey's identity crisis. In negotiating competing claims and forging a new national consensus, Turkey will continue to confront challenges to its legitimacy. How it manages these challenges in the paradox of change might define the future of the region, Europe, and political Islam.

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