

THE UNITED STATES' AND EUROPE'S TURKISH CONNECTION. EUROPE'S TURN TO MANAGE IT

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1. Introduction: An unsubstantial debate.

In December 2004 the European Union (EU) took the historical (if controversial) decision to start accession negotiations with Turkey – accession negotiations being a process from which, so far, accession has always ensued. Yet the European debate that led to that decision was for the most uncritical. All that officials would venture in favour of accession negotiations was that the “EU simply cannot afford to say no” to Ankara. And, significantly, the debate about Turkish membership continues to this day to be largely unsubstantial.

The more than forty years of waiting for formal accession talks, since the Ankara Agreement (1963) first suggested the possibility of Turkey’s membership in the then European Community, provide in themselves self sufficient reason for considering that decision “historical”.¹ Those four decades were marked by progress, difficulties, and instances of outright rejections of Turkey’s aspirations, at different times. A particularly serious setback was the 1997 Luxembourg European Council’s refusal to open the negotiations phase while that was instead allowed for a number of Eastern European countries. The democratic and economic credentials of some of those countries were arguably comparable to, or even less than those of Turkey.²

Thus, even more, the historical significance of the December 2004 decision has to do with the fact that Turkey has always been treated as a special case and as a “different” country. Since the late 1970s other Mediterranean countries in poor economic and political conditions started the accession process and were rapidly accepted as members. Then, as said, the former Communist ones came in the 1990s. Whatever the reservations related to their becoming part of the Union, about none of those candidate countries European officials have ever commented that it “ha[d] a different culture, a different approach, a different way of life,” as Valery Giscard D’Estaing did in December 2002 with regard to Turkey.³ The former French President was far from being an isolated voice. And that same sort of hostility to Turkish membership continued to be frequently voiced, by commentators and officials, in subsequent years.⁴

In fact, such positions are not isolated references to cultural differences. They are recurrent pattern that characterise the way in which the European countries have always attempted to reinforce their own common identity – that is, by way of the social and cultural construction of an “other”. As was amply documented by Iver Neumann, during many centuries the “Turk” was the expedient, “dominant other” that afforded the Europeans a common identity otherwise unthinkable for

¹ The Agreement Creating an Association Between the Republic of Turkey and the European Economic Community, or “Ankara Agreement”, entered into force on 1 January 1964. Art. 28 of the Agreement explicitly cites full membership in the European institution as an eventual outcome of the process envisioned in the agreement itself. Ankara applied for membership in 1987.

² 1997 was not the only setback. After being recognized as candidate state by the Helsinki European Council of December 1999, the Brussels Council of December 2002, while proceeding with the “big bang” enlargement to ten new members, asked Ankara to submit to another test in two years time before the decision related to accession negotiations. In 1997, Turkey was on a par with other countries with which the EU started accession negotiations. Moreover, comparing data related to the year before the start of accession negotiations (1999 for Rumania and Bulgaria, 2004 for Turkey), Turkey appeared to be in better shape than both Romania and Bulgaria or one of the two with regard to GNP per capita at purchasing power parities (PPP), growth rate at constant prices, rate of inflation, lower employment in agriculture, more developed services sector, and current account as percentage of GNP. Data are from the IMF and EU Commission.

³ *Le Monde*, 9 November 2002.

⁴ For instance, in the summer of 2004 then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger reminded all, from Rome, that in 1683 the Turks had reached the gates of Vienna.

“Christian” countries ever at war with one another.⁵ In an echo of that deeply rooted cultural bias, Germany’s *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* last October challenged the EU Commission’s favorable position on Turkey by pointing to that country’s cultural alienness and the “kinship” Europeans have always felt “even when they were at war with each other”⁶ (a statement of inadvertent ethnocentrism if not faux-pas, especially if written in Germany.)⁷

There are, of course, other, more tangible reasons that make the decision to board the accession train a historical one. Thus, a broader way of looking at the process of democratic consolidation of a country such as Turkey is in the context of economic and political globalization – with more advanced rules compelled by the institutional inclusion being part of that context. Turkey’s size and geopolitical relevance make that consolidation most important to Western countries. Then there are strategic considerations such as the country’s geographical position and Turkey’s function as inter-continental “bridge” or “crossroads,” including as concerns energy transit routes (Turkey’s crucial importance in this respect became evident in its role in the sanctions against Iraq in 1990 and afterward.)⁸ Finally, Turkey is often referred to as a regional “powerhouse,” by which it is meant that it is the largest economy in the region and also the most industrially advanced one, which adds much to its strategic importance⁹ and makes Turkey into one of today’s “pivotal states”.¹⁰

Paradoxically, to many news commentators and the public in Europe, what experts consider a strategic asset is a liability and a risk factor that makes Turkey’s inclusion in the Union problematic, if not altogether undesirable. “More democracy is needed in the enlargement

⁵See Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: The East in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). See also Meltem Muftuler-Bac, “Through the Looking Glass: Turkey in Europe”, *Turkish Studies*, 1. 1. (Spring 2000), who stresses how “Turks represented all that was negated in European identity: savage, barbarian, despotic, oppressive, violent and a threat to European civilization”. Those are disposition and stereotypes not solely of the past. In March 1997, at a meeting of European Christian democratic parties in Brussels, Helmut Kohl defined the European integration as a “civilization project” in which a Muslim country such as Turkey has no place. *Financial Times*, 5 March 1997.

⁶6 October 2004. On the same date another German daily, *Die Welt*, concluded: “Turkey is not Europe and will never be Europe”. The debate about Turkey has grown in importance also due to the growing relevance of the Turkish vote in recent elections there.

⁷Such comments are, among others, inconsistent with the record of actual Ottoman participation in European alliances during centuries of unending conflict among the “Christian” states. The Paris Conference that concluded the Crimean war, in 1856, described the Ottoman empire as “part of the European concert.”

⁸A few bibliographical references that discuss the geopolitical dimension of the problem are the following: Feroz Ahmad, “The Historical Background of Turkey’s Foreign Policy,” in L.G. Martin and D. Keridis (eds.), *The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004); Ewan W. Anderson, *The Middle East: Geography and Geopolitics* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Henry J. Barkey, “Turkey and the New Middle East: A Geopolitical Exploration,” in H.J. Barkey (ed.), *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey’s Role in the Middle East* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996); Saul Bernard Cohen, *Geopolitics of the World System* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003); Sadi Erguven, “Turkey, Strategic Partner of the European Union,” in *Turkey and European Union: Nebulous Nature of Relations* (Beytepe-Ankara: Turkish Foreign Policy Institute, 1996); Graham Fuller, “Conclusions: The Growing Role of Turkey in the World,” in by G.E. Fuller and I.O. Lesser (eds.), *Turkey’s new geopolitics: from the Balkans to Western China* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993); John Gault, *The European Union: Energy Security and the Periphery*. Occasional Paper Series, no. 40 (Geneva: Centre for Security Policy, 2002); Fiona Hill, “Caspian Conundrum: Pipelines and Energy Networks,” in Martin and Keridis (eds.) *The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy*, cit.; Alan Makovksy, “Turkey,” in R. Chase, E. Hill, and P. Kennedy (eds.) *The Pivotal States: A New Framework for U.S. Policy in the Developing World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999); Meltem Müftüler-Bac, “Turkey’s Role in the EU’s Security and Foreign Policies.” *Security Dialogue*, 31.4 (2000); Oktay F. Tanrisever, “Turkey and Russia in Eurasia,” in Martin and Keridis (eds.) *The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy*, cit.; Paul Williams, “Turkey’s H₂O Diplomacy in the Middle East,” *Security Dialogue*, 32.1 (2001).

⁹Dimitris Keridis, “Foreign Strategies and Domestic Choices: Balancing Between Power Politics and Interdependence,” in Martin and Keridis (eds.), *The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy*, cit.

¹⁰Robert Chase, Emily Hill, and Paul Kennedy, “Pivotal States and US Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, 75.1 (1996.)

process,” wrote a recent commentary in London’s *Financial Times*, “[...] European leaders need to understand that many Europeans citizens do not share their strategic view and do not want to have a common border with Iraq.”¹¹ And if the EU talks about Turkey almost solely through the Commission’s “regular reports” related to enlargement, that shows the same concern that Brussels has for Latvia or Bulgaria, for example,— with the added negative factors of Turkey’s very large population, its history of labor-export and, of course, the cultural differences discussed above.

In recent years, also as a consequence of the inclusion or upcoming inclusion of a dozen new countries, Brussels has begun to recognize its own power in transforming the political environment around it and, for the first time, has started to think about ways for further expanding its political influence in the adjacent regions. Even so, the Union countries remain defective in their ability to secure their vital interests by building broader international strategies or intervening on “high politics” international issues.

The contention here is that Europe should be looking at Turkey also in terms of broader international strategy and that the lack of a substantial debate on Turkey has first of all to do with that defective aspect of Europe. While this is no place for reviewing the broad debate about the effectiveness and the reach of the EU’s common foreign and security policy (CFSP), and more in general of its external relations, that contention is backed in this paper on a comparison of the awareness about the strategic relevance of Turkey in Washington after World War Two and the present debate on the Turkish case in Europe.

2. Recognizing Turkey’s strategic relevance.

The first point which needs be stressed here is the continuity of the main Western powers’ interest in keeping Turkey within the Western sphere of influence evident at the end of World War Two. There has always been, that is, continuity in the role Turkey has played in the broader strategies of those Western powers.

As Washington was gradually identifying, during the last part of the war, the main elements of its international strategy and of the postwar order – a combination of new international frameworks and of actual power – the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey and the Middle East increasingly began to take center stage. And in the months following the end of the war in Europe, in late 1945 and early 1946, Washington was torn between the political pressure to disengage from the different war theatres and the awareness that there were new responsibilities befalling on it in the defense of its expanding interests and, more broadly, of those of the its closest Western allies.

It was first Moscow’s insistence in keeping its troops in Northern Iran, despite the end of hostility in Europe, that made Washington suspicious about possible Soviet plans to have a government there “amenable to Soviet demands and hostile to other foreign nations,” similarly to what had already happened in a number of countries in Central and Southeastern Europe.¹² And when pressures from Moscow mounted on Ankara for a revision of the regime of the Straits and for territorial adjustments in the Eastern part of the country, officials in Washington reacted with great alarm based on that lesson of the Soviet policies in Iran. Then, when also Greece became in danger of falling under Soviet influence due to the civil war in the country, the Truman administration

¹¹ Sylvie Goulard, “France’s malaise is teaching Europe a lesson,” *Financial Times*, 18 May 2005.

¹² Memo by Wallace Murray to the secretary of state, 22 September 1945. See US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers* (Washington, D.C.), 1945, VIII, p. 417. (These volumes are heretofore referred to as *FRUS*.)

took action, projecting, for the first time in peacetime, the power of the United States in the direction of Europe. Washington's policy of containment had its first concrete application in Turkey and Greece, in early 1947.

What Washington was then recognizing was that Iran, Turkey and Greece constituted a bulwark that protected what officials there were increasingly defining as US economic and strategic interests in the Near and Middle East as a whole, the focal point of which was Middle Eastern oil. Greece and Turkey stood for control of the Eastern Mediterranean and a land corridor to the Middle East and to the Persian Gulf.¹³

A specific position regarding Turkey was first elaborated in an important Memorandum by the Near Eastern and African Affairs (NEA) of the State Department dated 15 August 1946. The Memorandum made a number of points. First of all, NEA warned, Moscow's primary objective was to obtain control of Turkey. In such a case, it would be difficult for the United States to prevent the Soviet Union from obtaining control of the whole Near East and Middle East – the territory lying between the Mediterranean and India. Moreover, past experience suggested that when the Soviet Union obtained predominance in an area, all Western influence was gradually eliminated. And finally, since the United States had vital resources and communications interests in the area, it was in the vital interest of the United States that the Soviet Union should not by force or by the threat of force succeed in its unilateral plan with regard to the Straits and Turkey.¹⁴ Another Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, of 23 August 1946, plainly stated that Turkey was “the most important military factor in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.”¹⁵

The second point that needs to be clarified here is that, whatever the centrality the Soviet factor was to acquire in Washington's postwar foreign policy, the first causal element of the emergence of that policy concerning the Eastern Mediterranean had to do with the strategic imperative of the continued control of that region in a context in which Britain was proving less and less capable of doing so. In other words, Washington's growing awareness of the need to get involved in the Eastern Mediterranean coincided with the realization that in the past Great Britain had provided the security framework for the control of that very region but that now London was abandoning that role.

As far back as mid-1944 the State Department's Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs was of the opinion that British and American interests in the area were absolutely identical.¹⁶ At that same time, Washington became increasingly concerned about the decreasing ability of the British to keep controlling that area. In October of that year, President Roosevelt received the following letter from Lincoln Mac Vaughn, one of his closest advisers and then US Ambassador to the Greek and Yugoslav governments in exile in Cairo:

Evidence is [...] plain here of Britain's inability to defend alone her Empire against powerful pressures under conditions of modern war. I doubt if in any part of the world it can appear so clear as here [...] that militarily speaking, the British empire is anachronistic, perfect for the eighteenth century, impossible for the twentieth. Every day brings its evidence of weakness and dispersion, of consequent opportunism, and dependence on America's nucleated strength. No one, I feel, can keep his eyes and ears open here and fail to believe that the future maintenance of the Empire depends on how far England consents to frame her foreign policy in agreement with Washington,

¹³ Bruce R. Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Middle East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey and Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 374.

¹⁴ *FRUS*, 1946, VII, p. 838.

¹⁵ *FRUS*, 1946, VII, pp. 857-858.

¹⁶ Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Middle East*, cit., p. 301.

and how far we in our turn realize where that Empire, so important to our own security, is most immediately menaced. British fumbling in the Balkans, fears of what may happen in Palestine, uneasiness as to Syria, doubts regarding Turkey, and alarm over growing Soviet interest in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the whole North African coast [...] all seems to me to teach the same lesson in their varying degrees.¹⁷

To the recognition that the region constituted a major strategic interest of the United States and that such an interest had been defended in the past in the framework of the British imperial policies, the Soviet factor was then to add further urgency in making Washington realize the need to invest resources in maintaining that same region under control. This then, as indicated, would grow into an overall approach as the scope of US postwar foreign policy broadened. In an often quoted Memorandum of early March 1947 (London had already asked Washington to take over in helping the conservative forces in Greece), Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs William Clayton was to suggest a general, strategic approach. Great Britain, Clayton stated, was fast losing the reins of world leadership. There were two powers which could pick up those reins: the United States and the Soviet Union. And it was necessary for the United States to do so, Clayton suggested, if another war was to be avoided.¹⁸

The taking over by the United States was gradual, if not slow. For some time after the end of the war, the expectation in Washington was still one of complete disengagement from the Balkans as well as from Turkey and Iran. Congress was strongly urging the Truman administration in that direction. As late as February 1946, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff was arguing that Washington should avoid military commitments in the area because of geographic distances and impracticability of secure lines of communications. At that time, the Chiefs of Staff's suggestion was that the US should act solely through the United Nations in relation to that region. However, not more than one month later, tensions with Moscow over Iran made the Truman administration recognize that the UN had serious limitations. That same year, repeated Soviet pressures on Turkey made Washington acknowledge the need for a firmer stand towards Moscow's policies and compelled it to thoroughly revise and integrate its policies toward the Eastern Mediterranean and the Northern Tier.¹⁹

With London anxious to withdraw its troops from Greece, on 17 September 1946 British Foreign Affairs Secretary Bevin met with US Secretary of State James Byrnes and they together decided that if Britain was unable to militarily assist Turkey, Greece and Iran, the US should take over the task. Shortly afterward, Clayton suggested that Washington should go beyond military assistance and include political and economic dimensions as well. Finally, when London proceeded with its military withdrawal, in February 1947, a consensus rapidly developed within the Truman administration that they faced no alternative but to move into the vacuum created by Britain's withdrawal. As indicated by the Clayton memorandum mentioned above, by now the administration was looking at this regional problem as being part of a general strategy for the defense of US international interests and the containment of the Soviet Union.²⁰

What followed during the Cold War decades is well known. The deepening and geographically widening confrontation between the US and the USSR froze both their respective spheres of influence and consolidated the role of the United States as the main world power regulating the international order. Turkey's formal participation in the Atlantic alliance also satisfied the interest

¹⁷15 October 1944 letter from Mac Vaughn to Roosevelt, cited by Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, cit., pp. 97-98.

¹⁸*FRUS*, 1947.

¹⁹See Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, cit., p. 212.

²⁰See Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, cit., Chapter 6.

of Turkish elites in being part of the Western community. In other words, for almost half a century, the security framework that anchored Turkey to the West remained organized by Washington and by US led institutions.

Consistent with that role, during decades (and still today) analyses of the relationship with Turkey produced in the United States – and not solely official analyses but also academic ones – have tended to stress the important strategic role that Turkey has played (and plays.) During decades, in those analyses the strategic role of Turkey balanced off, in the value attached to the relationship, Turkey’s poor record in its building of democratic institutions, human right and minority protection. However, as further explained below, after the end of the Cold War the role played by the United States with regard to Turkey and the Eastern Mediterranean begun to change.

3. The analogy with the post-Cold War phase

Many lessons can be learnt from the experience of that early postwar period that can help qualify Europe’s present approach to Turkey and to the Eastern Mediterranean region. The first one relates to Washington’s recognition of a “*vital*” interest in Turkey and its surrounding region in relationship to the postwar international order. A second point to derive from that experience is the *continuity of that interest* for the Western countries that emerged in the early analyses in Washington – already during the war years. Related to that is the awareness that the *British Empire had been the security framework* (an Empire “so important to our security,” as the lucid analysis of Ambassador Mac Vaugh put it) through which that US interest had been defended in the past. And finally, most important was the consequence derived from that analysis, as early as 1944 and 1945, that *Great Britain’s waning power* and its losing the “world leadership” demanded that the US take over in that role.

Clearly, a thorough analysis of the analogies and differences between the postwar years and those that followed the end of the Cold War regarding the Western position would require much more space than the next few pages of this short essay. Even so, some parallel conditions in those two moments in time can be used here to better explain the character of the recent European debate on Turkish accession to the Union. Granted that there are difference in the US and European relationship with Turkey (institutional access in the latter case), the analogies and differences to be drawn mostly concern the general assessment, in those two moments, of the importance attached to that relationship.

To begin with, can an analogy between the waning of Britain’s role in the region immediately after World War Two and that of the United States today be suggested? In some way it can – especially when one looks at the evolution of Washington’s overall role as a conditioning factor of world order.

The international context has profoundly changed, of course – but so has the international outlook of the United States. In the past, a proactive, global foreign policy of the United States had first of all to do with the presence of a global challenger. And after the Cold War, with no enemy posing an existential threat, the global interests and commitments of the United States increasingly shrunk to selected – if still many – issues to which the American state was still willing to commit resources. Moreover, if the existence of a global challenger afforded Washington also a rationale, domestically, for intervening in different parts of the world, that rationale disappeared when the Soviet Union renounced its earlier imperial policies and then itself disintegrated. The relationship between foreign policy and domestic politics fast changed with the former now much less

delegated to leaders and experts and more dependent on domestic politics. Then, the terrorist attacks against the United States dictated altogether new priorities to the country's foreign policy, further narrowing the scope of that foreign policy from broad global strategies to immediate politics requirements.

In addition to the evolution of US foreign policy, the political role of the European Union in the Eastern Mediterranean became more relevant – for reasons of proximity, economic interdependence and migration flows. At the same time, the disappearance of the East-West line of confrontation changed Turkey's standing in high international politics and relegated it and its problems to the region. And the strong pull toward Europe among the Turkish elite was now also related to the need to escape isolation and relative irrelevance. In particular, because of the greatly diminished role in world politics, NATO could now no longer satisfy even the symbolic need for integration with the West strongly felt by the elite.²¹

Together with its gravitational power after the Cold War, Europe's evolving policies of institutional inclusion proved most influential. The desire of many Eastern and Southern European countries for accession to the EU had to do both with cultural identity and with the fear of becoming marginalized while the fast pace of globalization dictated higher levels of international interaction and of normative integration. And, as indicated, with NATO playing a much diminished international role, in Turkey the expectations related to the need for institutional integration largely turned to the European Union.

It is correct to say today, that the demand for a broader and more incisive role of the European Union in the region grew enormously after the end of the Cold War. And, like for the United States in 1946-47, it seems increasingly to befall on the EU to keep Turkey anchored to the West. The crescendo of political reforms in the country, in connection with an intensified relationship with the Union, testifies to the productivity of that very relationship. Thus, there is clearly a role to play, but it does not seem that Europe is yet the appropriate actor.

4. Conclusion.

Unquestionably, the EU external reach has grown enormously in recent years. The EU countries have begun to recognize the international influence they can exert – especially economic and political influence. In contrast with the weak CFSP mechanism, the Union has discovered that its greatest influence derives from the transformational power of its policies of institutional inclusion, in particular over countries coming out of authoritarianism and communism. Started as a reluctant response to the demand for EU institutional relations and membership from Eastern European countries, the EU's Eastern enlargement turned into an effective policy for transforming Europe's international environment. "The incentive for reform created by the prospect for membership has proved to be strong – *enlargement has arguably been the Union's most successful foreign policy instrument,*" states the March 2003 "Wider Europe-Neighbourhood" Communication from the Commission to the Council and European Parliament.²² And, coming after the other historical decision of December 2002 (concerning the accession of eight formerly Communist countries, in addition to Malta and the Republic of Cyprus), the Commission's Communication for the first time

²¹ On this see also Meltem Muftuler-Bac, "Turkey's Predicament in the Post-Cold War Era," *Futures*, vol. 28, no. 3.

²² Communication from the Commission to the Council and European Parliament, *Wider Europe-Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, COM (2003) 104 final (Brussels, 11 March 2003.) Emphasis added.

attempted to build a broader, ambitious strategy based on that political instrument and aimed at “develop[ing] a zone of prosperity and friendly neighbourhood.”²³

Such an awareness of its own strategic capability and possible strategic reach is a major new development in the political evolution of the Union (it is also significant that it first came from the Commission.) It would then be important that that awareness also translate into an ability to more adequately assess the unique importance of relations such as those with Turkey, an ability to consider that country’s accession to the Union on the basis of more substantial reasons (beyond “inevitability”) and an ability to build a better, more consistent policy toward Turkey.

In contrast with the debate among American officials in those early postwar years and during the Cold War, today in Europe there is little appreciation of the extraordinary strategic importance of Turkey in world politics – and that both at the level of political leadership and of public opinion. Nobody has ever articulated the need to develop a more general strategy toward that region based on the collective European interest in it and why there seems to be a demand for a more pronounced European role. No official has ever presented to the European public the European interest in Turkey and surrounding region as “vital” and as synonymous with that of the United States, even though oil coming from the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea is certainly more vital to Europe than to the United States.

It would be hard to argue that such a region is not as relevant to today’s Europe as Washington recognized it was to it at the conclusion of World War Two. And if Europe has its own policy in relationship to that region that policy does not seem capable of dealing with many aspects of stability and order there. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990, Denmark was importing 70 per cent of the oil it needed only from that country. And Copenhagen had no tools to redress the situation outside its reliance on the framework of regional policies centered on and led by the United States.

In fact, there lies part of the explanation for the difference with the European approach today. It is impossible to have a strategy without having the necessary capabilities. And, while after World War Two the US fast emerged as the main organizer of world order, the postwar European state and European institutions grew within that international order organized by the United States. If a great success story because of their solid economic recovery and health, the EU countries developed both with a deficit of security capabilities and in the absence of broad international strategies of their own – those capabilities and strategies being, as indicated, largely supplied by the US. The European collective mechanisms developed since the early 1990s for a common foreign and security policy have proved and remain largely inadequate to tackle international issues even when those issues created enormous political pressures on the European countries, such as the crises in the Balkans in the 1990s.

In brief, having developed in a security framework largely organized and conditioned by the United States, the European Union and the individual European countries remain largely limited in their ability to deal especially with “high politics” issues in the international arena – with issues of world order and that often require hard instruments of intervention. If in the past there was continuity in treating the one with Turkey as a strategic relationship, today’s Europe remains mostly incapable of looking around itself in those terms. And that inability also means that the relationship is analyzed and often based on superficial political arguments and individual capitals’ idiosyncrasies, on claims brought up from distant historical events, and on that cultural factor discussed at the beginning of this paper. It means to leave that relationship be kept hostage to very

²³ Ibid.

specific problem a member state may have with Ankara, as in the case of Greece for decades and the Republic of Cyprus at present.

To maintain that Brussels' is incapable of recognizing the strategic relevance of that Turkish connection to it is not to belittle the role played by the European Union, especially in the most recent years, in helping Turkey in the process of political modernization and integration into the Western community of nations. In fact, the EU can count its contribution to the recent political evolution of Turkey as one of its most striking successes.²⁴ What has been missing, again especially in the most recent phase, is the European ability to look dynamically at its own interests, capabilities and evolving security framework within which it has so far developed.

While the EU's helping to bring about and monitoring political change in Turkey remains a most important activity, Brussels needs also to look at relations with that country in the context of the broadening responsibilities which befall on it with regard to stability and in the Mediterranean and in the context of a necessary broader strategic outlook concerning adjacent regions. In contrast with the public debate concerning Turkey's accession which has developed so far, a much more substantial one is needed in Europe. Leaders must explain that "not want[ing] to have a common border with Iraq" is a luxury Europeans can no longer afford – and in fact not a matter of democracy.

As indicated, the security framework that assures the international interests of the EU is fast changing. And that also implies that the admission of Turkey into the Union has at present a different meaning than if it had been carried out in 1963 or in 1987. Today, that admission is related to a responsibility the European Union cannot avoid in the defense of its own interests and more generally in its contribution to international stability.

²⁴ For a recent assessment of the role of the EU in the political evolution of Turkey see Mario Zucconi, *Dual Revolution in Turkish Politics and Role of the European Union*, Ethnobarometer Working Paper no. 9 (Rome: Ethnobarometer, forthcoming)