

From the Desk of the Editor

Turkey is often said to be situated in a tough neighborhood. In this issue of TPQ, we explore our neighbors' perspectives regarding Turkey's foreign policies and the effects of Turkey's bilateral relationships on the country's future.

We highlight two particularly thorny issues: the Armenian question and the Cyprus problem. These not only constitute challenges in Turkey's quest for EU membership, but also trigger strong sentiments domestically and internationally. Being able to exchange contrary views on these topics and debating steps forward is critical to making progress in this arena. From the regional outbreak of the virulent H5N1 strain of Avian Influenza to the prospect of Iran becoming a nuclear weapons power at Turkey's border, our neighbors are also an indispensable factor of human security. At the confluence of these dynamics lies an important reality: that cross-border and neighbor relations for Turkey are growing in importance; daily.

In the region, history plays an important role in shaping current sensitivities and priorities, often leading to observers being perplexed by seemingly irrational behavior. The conviction that foreign powers conspire to wrest land from Turkey is referred to as the *Sèvres Syndrome*. This has its roots in the Sèvres Treaty of 1920, which would have partitioned Anatolia among several different countries had Turks not waged a war of independence to reverse it. The perception of being surrounded by adversaries is an important characteristic of this syndrome. That many of our neighbors share similar insecurities is often forgotten in Turkey. Through the different perspectives we include in this issue, the parallel nature of our nationalisms are revealed.

History and current affairs are intertwined with domestic dynamics in Turkey's relations with its neighbors. In a sense, exploring our neighbor's viewpoints leads us to rethink aspects of our history and national identity. For example the developments in Iraq have brought to the forefront debates on what it means to be a Turk, in relation to Kurdishness. Though sometimes controversial, we can neither escape our neighbors nor our history with them. We have seen that the more we avoid debating difficult topics, the more they are likely to be exploited to our detriment by others.

Neighborly relations have implications for Turkey's other partners, as illustrated last year when Turkey strengthened ties with Syria while both the EU and the U.S. were headed in the opposite direction. Sometimes viewing bilateral relations as independent from global dynamics is shortsighted and gives an ad hoc flavor to policy.

As demonstrated by the fact that some Europeans view Turkey's neighborhood as an added value for the EU's global outreach, while others are concerned about Turkey's borders being the EU's own, our neighborly relations provide both pitfalls and opportunities.

A few words on the Balkans are in order, as they are not covered in this issue. Romania and Bulgaria are nearing EU membership. They are soon to be countries with a voice (in fact, a veto) within the EU regarding Turkey's potential membership. Dialogue between Turkey and these two countries at the university level, civil society and the media is weak. The time is past due for more proactive policies towards these two countries. New initiatives on all of these levels will require a bolstering of economic and intellectual capital on behalf of all parties involved.

Croatia has begun negotiations with the EU alongside Turkey. An understanding has not developed in Turkey about the implications of the parallel nature of these processes and their shared interests. This ambivalence merely plays into the hands of those in the EU who would rather not see Turkey as a member. In the past year, Turkish foreign policy has reflected a desire to strengthen relations with neighbors, cultivating stronger links with Russia for example. However, when it comes to investment in our neighbors to the northwest, efforts have gone largely neglected.

A serious and comprehensive policy towards both the Balkans and the Caucasus and Central Asia should be expected. Since the early 1990s, Turkey has been ambitious in rhetoric about our historical links and common lineage or religion, yet not in concrete initiatives. In order for Turkey to capitalize upon the opportunities these regions have to offer on economic and political levels, this must change.

This issue of TPQ takes risks in putting forth new perspectives on old problems and debates ideas about cementing the foundations of future relationships based on mutual goals and long sighted growth opportunities.

We are excited to announce that Honorable Carl Bildt (former Prime Minister of Sweden) has accepted to join our advisory board. We warmly welcome him on board!

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