

From the Desk of the Editor

As global attention is focused on the Arab Spring, the Eastern neighborhood of Turkey and Europe risks being neglected. In this issue of TPQ, we focus on both the Black Sea and the Southern Mediterranean region, constructively exploring questions that relate to the stabilization and democratization of Turkey's broader neighborhood.

Since its inception, TPQ has provided a platform for the debate of democratization in Turkey's neighborhood, giving a voice to opposition alongside official perspectives. Along the way, we have also consistently recognized the economic underpinnings to social and political change. With this issue of TPQ, we combine these themes in searching for synergy between Turkey and the Transatlantic bloc to develop constructive policies towards this neighborhood in flux.

Štefan Füle, EU Commissioner responsible for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy, outlines the scope for Turkey and the EU to cooperate in the Southern Mediterranean and Black Sea regions. Covering a broad geography, from Israel to the edges of the Caucasus, and a broad range of issues from Strategic Dialogue on foreign policy to civil society collaboration, he presents a vision of Turkey and the EU striking synergy in their common neighborhood to further mutual interests.

Alexander Rondeli examines developments in a geography which, – though it is not included among the EU's Eastern Partners, has important consequences for European security: the North Caucasus. Russia's volatile southern flank, the North Caucasus has not stabilized despite harsh security measures and increasing budgetary transfers from Moscow. Rondeli explains why this is the case and argues that the instability of the North Caucasus will prevent Russia from transforming into a modern democratic state.

Besides Islamization of the anti-Russian resistance, the author explains the local problems that prevent the region from stabilizing, such as rampant corruption, cronyism, clan loyalty, parochialism, the tradition of reliance on the strong leader, and a predominantly negative historical memory of interethnic relations. He also points out that the recognition of Kosovo and strong Russian support of separatism in Abkhazia and South Ossetia made Russia itself even more prone to separatism primarily in the North Caucasus.

Turkey is also quite concerned about turbulence in this region, and well aware of the dilemmas such an eventuality could cause in Ankara- torn between the desire

to have good relations with Moscow and sympathies among the Turkish public for the plight of the peoples of the North Caucasus.

Ross Wilson focuses on a relatively more “tame” but still vulnerable region, Central Asia and the Caucasus. He points out authoritarian governance, ethnic conflict, economic challenges, corruption, and other difficulties, and argues that the countries of the region need to devise strategies to cooperate with each other. Wilson also argues that the outside parties involved most intensively in the region have a joint interest in the stability of this geography and calls for not only intensified dialogue between them but also more focus on shared economic interests in this region. The Atlantic Council’s Black Sea Energy and Economic Forum, which TPQ is proud to be represented in, takes up these very issues in Istanbul annually.

Contrary to common wisdom, Turkish civil society has not been particularly active in the post-Soviet space which now falls partially within the scope of the Eastern Partnership program of the EU. Given the EU’s budding attempts to focus more on the transfer of values and support to civil society initiatives in this same neighborhood, it is surprising how few concrete steps have been taken to strike synergy with Turkish NGOs in the shared neighborhood of Turkey and the EU.

It is a positive development that Western counterparts are increasingly interested in working with Turkish civil society in the Middle East and North Africa. It is important to keep in mind though that sharing religion or culture is not enough to make meaningful contributions. Turkish NGOs have the potential to complement Western initiatives in the region; however, to do so, they will need to develop networks, a deeper understanding of local political and economic structures, language skills, and more, rather than relying solely on the oft -quoted traditions shared through history or mutual affinities.

Western conceptions of the potential of Turkey with its 70 million population to exercise soft power in its neighborhood should not be reduced to Ankara’s official apparatus. Turkish official foreign policy towards the neighborhood is bound to clash with European interests from time to time – as do individual EU member states with each other occasionally. To weather such friction between European and Turkish diplomatic corps or political parties, developing a neighborhood component to Turkey-EU relations that is distinct from official diplomacy and immune from politicians’ populist posturing will be important. Collaboration on the civil society front can be a more sustainable track, which in the longer run may also feed into official positions’ approximation.

Ivane Chkhikvadze elaborates on a related dimension in his article, pointing out that Turkish civil society has hardly caught up with the intensification of Turkish-Georgian political and economic relations.

Chkhikvadze introduces the divergences between Ankara and Moscow on issues such as the territorial integrity of Georgia. Cenk Sidar and Gareth Winrow also take up this example as a potential challenge for Turkey's improving relations with Russia. While underlining the ongoing Turco-Russian rapprochement, these authors draw attention to potential tensions between Ankara and Moscow in case the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh escalates.

While Turkey and Russia intensify their collaboration on the energy front, there are also concerns that Ankara may lose its freedom of maneuver in its foreign policy because of increasing energy dependence on Moscow. Cenk Sidar and Gareth Winrow zoom into negotiations, or bargaining, between Turkey and Russia over energy projects that may shape the future energy security of Europe. In doing so, the authors elaborate on the positions of domestic interest groups, with consequences for transparency and accountability.

Aylin Yardımcı assesses the EU's attempts to engage the southern Mediterranean countries as a failure – tracing policies stretching from the Barcelona process, which created the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) to the ENP in 2004, and then the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). She argues that developments in the southern Mediterranean give the EU an historical opportunity to rethink and compensate for its past mistakes. Looking back, Yardımcı points out that the lack of the prospect of EU membership and the absence of any clear, concrete, and short-term gains for the partner countries weakened the leverage of the EU. Moreover, economically the EU's attraction was low because of the EU's protectionism on trade of agricultural products and little European private sector interest and thus low levels of foreign direct investment by EU-originated companies in the EU's southern neighbourhood.

Clearly, the EU member states' ability to act in unison and the EU's influence on regional dynamics are important in determining Turkish enthusiasm for EU membership.

The Cyprus problem has technically stalled Turkey's EU accession process and negatively affects Turks' perception of the viability of Turkey's EU membership. This problem has reduced trust in the EU among Turkish nationals and has struck a blow to public support for membership. However the flipside is also true: the stronger Turkey-EU relations are, the more constructive and compromising Turkey is likely to be vis a vis the solution of the Cyprus problem. In his article, George

Kyris focuses on this dimension, outlining how Turkey's EU prospects have effected Ankara's policies engagement with various Turkish Cypriot actors. Stretching out of our neighborhood, Altay Atli focuses on Turkey-China relations, zooming into the evolution of trade strategies. Defining China as a 'neglected region' in Turkish foreign and economic policy, Atli suggests that Turkey is adapting a more sustainable and progressive economic policy towards China, yet also points to continuing shortcomings.

In this issue of TPQ, we also explore the interaction of foreign and domestic policies in Turkey, focusing on concrete issues such as freedom of expression, local governance, minority rights and education.

In their article, Eldar Mamedov and Viktor Makarov argue that Turkey falls short of being a model for the Arab world. While Turkey is an example of "the change of elites at the helm of the state," it has yet to establish democratic checks and balances, free media, effective political alternatives, and the building up of tolerance towards alternative individual cultural and lifestyle choices. In other words, tyranny of the majority remains a risk.

Elaborating on Turkey's recent track record with regard to freedom of expression, the authors argue that Turkey presents a mixed picture, at best. While some progress has been made in areas previously considered taboo, serious legal and political curbs on the full exercise of the freedom of expression remain. While Turkey's experience with reforms can serve as an example of ongoing democratic transformation in a Muslim society, it remains to be seen whether Turkey will indeed become a model democracy Arab countries will want to emulate, the authors conclude.

İnan İzci traces how globalization has changed the ways in which political authority is exercised over territory and societies, focusing on the rising prominence of local administration and the participation of civic stakeholders in decision-making. Analyzing the redistribution of political power across different policy areas and authority levels in the EU, he elaborates on the structural reforms Turkey would need to make in order to harmonize with EU practice.

Decentralization attempts since 2004 have stalled and the state remains highly centralized, with delegation of power to local authorities seen as a challenge of the unitary character of the Turkish state, and thus controversial. Though some improvements to the local administrative system have been made since 2004, many of the legislative changes are simply not implemented by most local authorities and decisions continue to be made on the basis of patronage relationships. Ex-

pecting the EU process to drive further transformation is not reasonable according to İzci, because EU conditionality has lost ground with the political wavering of EU politicians in regard to Turkey's eventual membership. The author argues that elected domestic actors should be pro-active in taking responsibility for Europeanizing their governance practices. They can build their capacity by taking advantage of the many opportunities they have to increase interaction with European local authorities, and learn how to most effectively manage local responsibilities, work with local stakeholders and influence national policy processes.

Another article examining the effects of globalization on Turkey's policies is that of Yunus Yılmaz, who examines Turkey's "pro-active foreign policy," and argues that the interaction between domestic and foreign policy, by virtue of Turkey's cultural, social, historical and ethnic ties with neighbors, has shaped Turkey's changing policies inside and out. The author points out that transformation at the global level has necessitated that Turkey pursue a multilateral foreign policy and a more inclusive policy towards minorities domestically.

In contrast to many past authors of TPQ analyzing Turkey's new foreign policy, Yılmaz also argues that it is not realist concepts, such as gaining regional influence, that drive Turkey's endeavors in the neighborhood, but rather value-based considerations, such as achieving peace in the region, and ethical concerns. Finally, the author questions whether Turkey's value-based approaches can yield results in light of the fact that other parties pursue interest-based policies in a realist world order. He concludes that globalization will increasingly favor states pursuing consistent foreign policies on the basis of values, not interests.

Aytuğ Şaşmaz and Nihan Köseleci Blanchy analyze Turkey's most recent ranking in OECD's PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) survey and tests, which measure basic skills of 15-year-old students. While demographically Turkey has an important opportunity to fuel its economic growth on the basis of its large young population, this will only be the case if the quality of education improves. The Turkish education system will need to qualitatively develop in order for the labor force to be competitive and living standards to reach European averages. According to the authors' examination of the test results, while Turkey's scores have improved over the years, Turkey's ranking *vis-à-vis* other countries has not seen considerable change.

Ultimately, education is at the core of many of the social and political issues we take up as TPQ. As a journal we have always steered our institution towards empowering young people, plugging Turkey's youth into global processes, and fostering critical thinking in every endeavor. We look forward to incorporating more views that represent the significance we attribute to youth, environment, and gen-

der issues in years to come.

In the past year, Turkish Policy Quarterly, with support from the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (BST), has carried out five roundtable discussions, in Turkey, Europe and the United States. Through these platforms, we have had the opportunity to go beyond the journal content to further pursue some of the debates on pressing questions involving Turkey and the neighborhood. For more information about each roundtable, please visit: <https://www.turkishpolicy.com/category/110/tpq-roundtables/>

As we celebrate our 10th year, we strive to offer balanced, inter-disciplinary, and independent coverage of policy-related developments in Turkey and its neighborhood. In the past year, we have increased our activity in social media platforms and deepened our partnerships. We are grateful for the support provided by Kadir Has University and appreciate the in-kind contributions of European Stability Initiative, Hürriyet Daily News, and the Atlantic Council of the United States. The Friedrich Naumann Foundation has kindly supported us this year for both the journal and roundtables, and our outreach opportunities have been expanded with the collaboration of Euractiv and AB Haber. We invite all our readers to consider supporting us by providing feedback, contributing articles, advertising with TPQ, or subscribing. (Subscription available online at <https://www.turkishpolicy.com/subscribe/>). Our upcoming issue, Fall 2011, will focus on NATO's role in the security of Turkey's neighborhood, with support from the NATO Public Diplomacy Division. We welcome your suggestions, as always.

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