

Turkey: Surprises and continuity

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Until recently the international press, when covering Turkey, always had some standard topics such as violations of human rights, the Kurdish problem, or the Cyprus question. There was nothing peculiar in this since this country has almost never played a role as regional power - except perhaps with the military intervention in Cyprus in 1974. However, in the last twelve months, Turkey has been the source of many stories in the international press related to international strategic questions.

Turkey's membership of the EU was one of the most discussed questions before and during the Copenhagen Summit of December 2002 despite the fact that this country was not among those whose full membership would be decided upon at this summit. However, Turkey's membership was being so vividly discussed during the preparation period of the summit that Mr. Verhogen, the EU Commission member responsible for enlargement, had to declare that they would not allow the Copenhagen Summit to become a "Summit for Turkey". Yet nobody could deny that one of the summit's main headaches was the necessity of giving a proper response to the Turks without humiliating them and also to remind the overall community of the urgency of defining the Union's ultimate boundaries.

The outcome of the Turkish general elections held in December 2002 also received extensive coverage in the international press. A "neo-Islamist" party took power in a Muslim country, a NATO member and a long-time US ally, whose role would be vital in the US-UK military assault against Iraq.

A few months later, on March 1, 2003, yet another surprise came as the Turkish Parliament rejected a motion that would allow US forces to attack Iraq from Turkish soil. This was a bitter surprise not only for the US-UK Alliance but also for the Turkish political establishment, who ardently supported Turkey's participation in the invasion and had given their assurances that the motion would pass with an overwhelming majority vote.

As is well known, the US quickly changed its military plans and did what they had planned to do without the direct contribution of Turkey. This was not the end of strategic cooperation between two countries. As US and UK forces experience more and more difficulties in newly "liberated" Iraq, the question of sending Turkish soldiers to the country has been put on the agenda. Seven months after its rejection of a motion allowing the US forces to attack Iraq from its North, the same Turkish parliament voted in its great majority for a motion authorizing its government to send Turkish soldiers to Iraq to help in the supposed "reconstruction of Iraq".

“Turkey-EU relations” or the false agenda of Turkish politics

Recent opinion polls in Turkey show that more than three-quarters of people questioned are in favour of the country joining the EU. The polls indicate also that among the young, more than 75% of those questioned are ready to settle in any European country as soon as Turkey becomes a member. Another large majority favours Turkey's inclusion in the EU for the simple reason that Turkish citizens will benefit from the right of free circulation of labour within the community. [1]

As a matter of fact, these polls indicate more the particularity of the period during which EU membership became a significant topic on the Turkish political agenda than the average citizen's opinion on the EU. To understand this particularity, it is necessary to dwell briefly on the last three years' developments.

Turkey has supposedly been part of the project of EU construction ever since the signing of the Rome Convention in 1963. [2] Nevertheless, many European leaders have expressed, and continue to express, their views over the impossibility of Turkey's full membership of the community. [3]

In spite of this, conscious of its privileged relations with the Union stemming from its historical political and economic links as well as its geo-strategic position, Turkey applied for full membership in 1987. Some time later, in 1995, Turkey and the EU signed the Customs Unions Agreement, which could be considered as the culmination point in this relationship. It should be recalled that Turkey is the only candidate country that signed such a Customs Union agreement without being guaranteed full membership. [4] A few years later, during the EU Helsinki Summit held in December 1999, Turkey was granted the status of a candidate for accession to the EU. [5]

It is difficult to claim that the decision of the EU Helsinki Summit stimulated an enthusiasm among ordinary citizens of Turkey towards the Union. It would not be an exaggeration to say that if the same type of opinion poll mentioned above had been carried out immediately after the declaration of the Helsinki Summit in 1997, the results would probably have been quite different, indicating above all the indifference of the citizens of Turkey towards the issue. Such indifference would be quite understandable given that the question of full membership in the EU has never been discussed seriously in the public sphere of this country. Except for a minority of the “elite” (a handful of bureaucrats, journalists, academics and intellectuals), Europe, for average Turkish citizens, is nothing but a distant world to which they yearn to go as a tourist or a student or to settle down as an immigrant worker.

Yet the picture in 2002 would be quite different. A read through of the Turkish newspapers of spring and summer of 2002 could have led some to conclude that the EU issue had been widely discussed in this country and that Turkey was on the Union's doorstep. Parallel to the domination of the national agenda by this question, a considerable shift in the public opinion has been witnessed, with a large majority of the country's population beginning to rally behind the prospect of EU membership.

It was quite clear that this was neither an outcome of a serious public debate nor the result of an evolution in perspectives. There was no serious public debate and what happened could be qualified as a sudden dramatic change rather than an “evolution”. It should be recalled that, just a few years ago, in February 1999, when the PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) leader Öcalan sought asylum in Italy, a chauvinistic wave swept over Turkey with the expression of public hatred towards, not only Italy, but also other European countries for supposedly “sheltering” Turkey's most wanted man. Moreover, the results of the general elections that were held a few months later in April 1999 were significant in this respect. The two biggest winners of the elections, the MHP and the DSP, had positions on the EU that were far from sympathetic. [6]

Besides, the three party coalition government formed after these elections had positions, at least until the financial crisis of February 2002, which were quite uncooperative on issues related to the EU - apart from, of course, the imposed economic criteria. [7] The coalition parties were very half-hearted over the application of the "Copenhagen political criteria" and the solution of the question of Cyprus, which had already become a EU problem. The political criteria imposed by the EU necessitated significant transformations in the framework of Turkish politics and in its conservative political culture; and it was this political framework and culture that were defended by the coalition parties as well as the military.

The same applies to the Cyprus question. Since this was (and still is) one of Turkey's "national causes", there were not many candidates among the governing parties to be open for a real solution to this problem. The entire political establishment, including the media and the general staff of the armed forces, considered any pressure from the EU on the question of Cyprus as an insult to national dignity.

Regarding the EU demand for Turkey's compliance with IMF and World Bank propositions, the coalition parties had a contradictory position. These propositions were compatible with their ideological stand, that is, they were also in favour of significant neoliberal measures. Yet these "bitter pills" to achieve the so-called "efficient market economy" were extremely unpopular among large sections of society and consequently were in open contradiction with these parties' clientelist traditions. It was this reality that pushed the coalition parties to apply these solutions in an opportunistic manner that sometimes annoyed IMF representatives.

Nonetheless, a short time later, not only public opinion, but also the governing parties -particularly the ANAP [8] and DSP- changed dramatically their positions towards the EU. During the summer of 2002, the Turkish Parliament passed a number of bills ("convergence packets") meeting the demands of the so-called "Copenhagen criteria". Among these, there was significant legislation that signified - though merely on paper - important democratic progress, including the abolition of capital punishment. One should not forget that these liberal bills were passed by a Parliament whose composition was probably one of the most reactionary in history of the modern Turkish Republic.

On the other hand, under the supervision of Kemal Dervis, economy minister, who had been appointed by Prime Minister Ecevit, in other words, transferred from the World Bank after the shock of the February 2002 financial crisis, the IMF "prescriptions" were put into practice with much greater care.

As for the Cyprus situation, it gradually became possible to discuss one of the 'untouchables' of Turkish politics. All these developments went hand in hand with an almost surreal coverage of the question of EU membership by the press, radio and television as if it was a matter of months away. [9]

Given the reality of the relationships between Turkey and the EU, full membership is an evident illusionary perspective. Yet, under the terrible pressure of the economic crisis, large sections of Turkish society probably needed such an illusion after having lost a great deal of their optimistic visions and hopes on future. At the centre of this turn, there was obviously the severe crisis of February 2001.

Before dealing with the consequences of this crisis, to complete the political picture of Turkey in the late 1990s, let me make some points on the particular role played by the military in politics and the evolution of political Islam in Turkey.

Army generals: permanent winners of Turkish politics

With their victory over the Islamist movement in 1996, [10] the generals of the Turkish army probably thought that they had won their second victory within two decades; the first had been the suppression of the left and the trade union movement in the early 1980s following the September 12, 1980 coup. The Turkish left and trade union movement of the 1970s was very significant in many senses though it suffered from a terrible weakness, namely its disunity. The generals won their war against the left relatively easily, not having to resort to mass murder campaigns as had been typical in similar cases such as Indonesia in 1965, Chile post-September 1973 or Argentina in the late seventies. In Turkey in the early 1980s, mass arrests were sufficient. Yet, regardless of the degree of the severity of the repression or the methods used by the generals, the overall picture after the repression period was that, having lost its left 'wing' and its tradition of social movement, Turkish politics would never be the same.

Then, from the late 1980s onwards, came the ascendancy of political Islam that was in a way the reflection of the current developments of the region as a whole. However, it was also the product of the general's repression that utilised religion against "subversive leftist ideologies". The ascendancy of political Islam in Turkey reached its peak with the formation, in 1996, of the coalition government led by Erbakan, a veteran of the Islamist movement in Turkey. Yet, after ten months in power, this Islamist-led government was forced to resign by the military and with that the operation of suppression, though in a rather mild manner, of political Islam was launched. Towards the end of the 1990s, it seemed that the suppression of political Islam was complete. During that time, the generals probably began to look to a third victory, in their fight against Kurdish rebels. Given the developments of the low intensity war, all indicators showed that the generals would win in a few years' time. A short time later, this expectation turned out to be fairly realistic.

On February 16, 1999, Bulent Ecevit, the then Turkish prime minister, declared in front of a huge gathering of journalists that the leader of the insurgent Kurdish movement the PKK was in the hands of the Turkish security forces, was being kept in an undisclosed place and would be taken to Turkey very soon. Later it became known that the Kurdish leader had been arrested or captured by "unknown" people in Kenya and handed over to the members of Turkish Special Forces waiting for him in an aeroplane at Nairobi airport. [11] Whatever the real circumstances of this capture, it was the inevitable outcome of the partial failure of the long armed struggle that lasted about 15 years, causing the death of more than 25,000 people (most of them armed militants) and the displacement of millions of people of Kurdish origin.

The developments that followed this capture were striking. The PKK leader made a call from his prison cell for an end to the armed struggle, renouncing in the meantime the corner stone of his movement's political program, that is the formation of an independent Kurdish state.

The April 1999 election results were almost a direct consequence of these developments. The two fiercest nationalist parties (the MHP from the right and the DSP from the "left") were the big winners and they formed, with the participation of the ANAP/Motherland Party, a coalition government in May 1999. With the formation of this coalition, the big upheavals that had deeply disturbed the country over the last 40 years seemed over. There were no more social movements led by the left, nor a Kurdish or Islamist threat. This was now a stability of political life that was marked by corruption, clientelism and the army's authoritarian surveillance. It appeared that the political framework designed by the putschist generals of the September 12, 1980 coup had now won its ultimate victory. The society they wanted to atomise and depoliticise was now in the state they had dreamed of.

It is this rather colourless political picture of Turkey would change dramatically within three years with the victory of the neo-Islamist party in the general elections of December 3, 2002. First of all, the results of these elections changed almost the entire professional cadres of the country. The victorious Justice and Development Party (AKP or AK Party) had been formed recently by former militants and leaders of the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi), the archenemy of the Turkish generals, following its closure by a Constitutional Court decision in 1997.

Nonetheless, this election victory was not a revival of the Turkish Islamist movement. It was rather the outcome of the combined effect of two separate developments: the inevitable transformation of political Islam that followed the international (or rather regional) trends and the financial crisis of February 2001 that shook Turkish society and the political establishment as a whole. To understand this peculiarity better, it is necessary to dwell on the evolution of the Islamist movement in Turkey in the late 1990s.

Neo-Islamist election victory in 2002: not a rebirth from its ashes

The trajectory of Turkey's Islamist movement of the mid-90s seemed to be presenting one of the best confirmations of Gilles Kepel's argument that political Islam, which had begun its ascendancy with the Iranian revolution of 1979, was now in decline. [\[12\]](#)

The Turkish Islamist movement represented by the Refah Partisi at last saw its leader Necmettin Erbakan as prime minister, in 1996, although in a coalition cabinet. Refah emerged as the biggest party in the general elections and its members had already conquered the local governments of the two major cities, Istanbul and Ankara. At that time it would not be an exaggeration to say that Refah, or rather political Islam, would become one of the major political forces of Turkey, a situation which was unthinkable a few years ago given the secular generals' permanent hold on power in Turkish politics. Some even began to think that Turkey might follow the Algerian experience, where the generals declared that they were ready to pay any price not to yield their power and did everything in their force to wipe out the Islamist movement. In fact there were some indications of the possibility of such a "solution".

The Turkish generals considered the Islamist premiership as an insult to "their republic" and gave the impression that they also were prepared to do everything to topple it. They succeeded in obtaining the resignation of the Islamist prime minister within ten months without having resorted to arms. The premier was forced to resign by the military and therefore, this was a sort of bloodless military coup, defined later on by a retired general as a "post-modern coup".

The resignation of Erbakan was not the only setback for political Islam in Turkey. Following this resignation, a new coalition government was formed excluding the Islamists. Moreover, a few months later, the Refah Partisi was closed down by the constitutional court and its leaders were banned for five years from active politics. Times were now difficult for the prominent Islamist leaders who had been excluded from Parliament as well.

The followers of Refah tried to resist this repression by forming the Virtue Party (FP or Fazilet) yet some time later some of them began to realise that nothing would be the same again for the Islamists in Turkey. The most opportunist elements of the movement began to consider whether it would be wise to continue on the same political line. A number of lieutenants of Erbakan, the one time unchallenged leader of the Islamists, began to speak about abandoning the methods of the hard-liners. Factions emerged and several representatives of the young generation decided to break away. Before the general elections of 1999, the Virtue Party was already crippled. Elections were held and the Islamists realised that they were now the fourth party in the parliament with

approximately 10% of the vote.

As for the splitters, whose leader Tayyip Erdogan - currently the prime minister - had been imprisoned for eight months and banned from politics for five years, they were planning to found a new political party which would not be accused of "Islamism". They began to claim that they had changed, that they were no longer the militant Islamists of the past and that they should be considered as the equivalence of the Christian Democrats in European politics. As for the public, there were no indicators to suggest that this would be the governing party in a few years time. Quite the contrary, almost every political observer agreed that the heyday of the Islamist movement had already gone. Some even began to think that the Islamists were on their way to marginalization.

A turning point: financial crisis of February 2001

Financial and economic crises are not rare events in Turkey. There have been many such experiences in the last 30 years, the most important of them being the crises of 1970, 1977-80 and 1994. However, the crisis of February 2001 has been the most profound in terms of economic indicators. Yet this is not the sole reason for its uniqueness. It is the most significant crisis of the 80 years of the Turkish Republic's history, for it coincided also with a period during which Turkish society exhausted almost all its major perspectives, projects or visions concerning the future. The left opposition, Kurdish opposition and political Islam, who had challenged the system, were defeated and were no longer capable of leading the people towards new and challenging objectives. On the other hand, the political system formed by the September 12, 1980 regime had been eroded and there was not a social or political force to renovate it. As for the political establishment, their exhaustion was all the more tangible since it had lost all credibility through several economic-financial scandals and cases of political corruption.

In spite of the grievances caused by the brutal effects of the crisis there was no trace of some typical consequences of a deep economic crisis in the Turkish society of 2001. There were no indications of social unrest or serious challenge, no likelihood of the emergence of populist movements, or the radicalisation of different sectors of society and the possibility of the appearance of "Bonapartist" leaders. On the contrary, there existed nothing but a feeling of apathy towards politics, which seemed to affect a great majority of the population.

In these conditions came two surprising developments: suddenly, the public, under the influence of some politicians and the Turkish media, has become almost obsessed with the idea of joining the EU. It is quite certain that some politicians, who no longer had an appealing political project and had exhausted all their credibility, considered "playing the EU card" as a last chance for survival [13] and this manoeuvre had a great impact on large sectors of society, who were in search of new approaches to their difficulties. In quite a short time, EU membership began to be seen as a total solution to all the problems that Turkish society endured. (Looking at the Turkish press in the summer of 2001, one might have thought that the country was on the verge of a referendum, which would seal the country's future relationship with EU.)

In the meantime, the newly founded neo-Islamist party, the AKP, began to appear at the top of all the opinions polls. Elections approaching, people had to choose someone. This was not the revival of political Islam. It was nothing but the ascendancy of a new party that did not have any governmental experience, in other words, did not have any responsibility for the extremely difficult conditions created by the crisis.

The AKP achieved a victory in the December 2002 elections, with a big majority, to the extent that it was very close to having the power to change the constitution. [14] The newly elected government

put EU membership at the top of its agenda. It was well known that those so-called neo-Islamists were, until a few years ago, fiercely opposed to the European Union on the grounds that the EU project was another assault of the crusades on the Muslim world. However, it was also very well known that they were no longer Islamists and that they were now ready to play the role of responsible statesmanship.

A month after the general elections in Turkey, in December 2002, the leaders of the EU countries met in Copenhagen for their historical enlargement process. By not giving Turkey a date for the commencement of the full membership negotiations, the summit did not respond to the common enthusiasm of large sections of the population. As a matter of fact, the large majority of EU leaders seemed a bit anxious about this enthusiasm. [15] There were even hints that they had begun to think of some sort of “intermediary solutions” that would block Turkey’s membership of the Union in a way that would not disappoint the Turks.

A few months later came yet another international development that caused the eruption of another surprise in Turkish political life: the Iraq War and Turkey’s unthinkable position.

Pacifist champion or strategic US ally?

What happened on March 1, 2003 in the Turkish Parliament in Ankara looked at first sight like an earthquake, which shook the half-century-old strategic relationship between US and Turkey. However, though this was an exceptionally surprising event, it is not difficult to see that it was caused by the tensions, not between the Turkish government and the US administration, but rather between the neo-Islamist government and the Turkish armed forces.

Right from the beginning, the US government openly demanded help from Turkey in support of its project of invading Iraq. On the Turkish side, to decide on such an important issue, the two power centres of the country, the government and the armed forces, had to be in agreement. Actually, both sides, for their own reasons, were in favour of the acceptance of the US demand. The leaders of the neo-Islamist government thought that they had the opportunity to prove that they had nothing to do with the Islamic fundamentalists of other times and that they had really changed, as they claimed on every occasion. They also envisaged obtaining some part in the “post-war reconstruction of Iraq”, which would facilitate their hold on power given the huge financial benefits that the so-called reconstruction represented. As for the chiefs of staff of the armed forces, they considered (and still do) the US as a strategic ally. To support their position, given the Iraqi Kurds’ alliance with the Americans, the generals argued that Turkey should not be left “out of the game”.

Though there was total agreement on the evaluation of the question, each side (and particularly the generals) tried to utilise this occasion to wear out its rival. This was quite understandable since the US war project was extremely unpopular in Turkey and it was a good chance to erode popular support for the government. At first the generals delayed disclosing their position. They even let some retired generals give the impression that they were not eager to support the Americans and that the government would be solely responsible for cooperation with the US invasion. The uncertainty was so high that when the government asked for a “recommendation” from the National Security Council (MGK), the constitutional organ in which the generals had considerable power and which held actual power in defence, international and national security questions, the latter, surprisingly, did not take a position on the issue, declaring that the decision-making body was Parliament.

Now Parliament, in other words the neo-Islamist party, would have to shoulder the total responsibility of participating in the US war on Iraq. The AKP deputies felt trapped by the military

and this feeling would be a determinant of the Parliamentary vote, which was held in a closed session that required a secret vote. However, this left open the possibility for every deputy to decide according to his/her conscience. [16] In the end, parliament rejected with a marginal majority a motion allowing US troops to attack Iraq from the north.

Though surprising, this was nothing but the unforeseen outcome of the permanent tension between the AKP government and the generals of the armed forces. After the parliamentary vote, both sides tried to be more “responsible” and to give the impression that for the high interests of the state they were ready to cooperate sincerely, yet it was already too late. In the end, US and British forces invaded Iraq without the active support of Turkey. However, this did not mean the end of the so-called strategic alliance. A few months later, the Iraqi case provided another occasion for Turkey to prove its loyalty to its ally. This time the US administration demanded that Turkish soldiers participate in security duties inside occupied Iraq in exchange for 8.5 billion dollars credit for Turkey. To ease out the neo-Islamists’ anxieties, they said that this was not supporting the invasion but for the “reconstruction of Iraq”. This time, the government and armed forces declared that they were in favour of it and warned the public and parliament that another tasteless surprise could lead to a divorce from the US and that this was the last thing they desired. In the end, their cooperation worked well and in the first week of October, the Turkish parliament authorised the government to send military forces to Iraq for a period of one year. Oddly enough, a month later the same Americans asked Turkey, first in a disguised manner and later on openly, to halt its preparations for sending troops to Iraq. For not only the Iraqi factions who are openly against the US-UK invasion, but the allies of the occupiers as well, notably the Kurds, said publicly that they were against the presence of Turkish soldiers on Iraqi soil. After a few weeks of uncertainty, during the first week of November, the Turkish foreign minister said that they had given up the idea of sending troops without explaining why they were so much in a hurry to take a parliamentary decision over the question. As for the pledged \$8.5 billion credit, the minister said that they could still have it when they needed it! In fact this whole story was yet another blunder whose origin this time resided on the uncertainties of the US in the Iraqi quagmire.

To sum up, over the last twelve months the number of surprising events in Turkish politics gave the impression that they were the indications of profound changes that could affect not only the country but the region as well. Yet these unprecedented developments should rather remind us of what the French say on similar occasions: *Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose!*

P.S.

* From International Viewpoint Online magazine : IV355 - December 2003.

Footnotes

[1] *Radikal*, February 11, 2003.

[2] More precisely, Turkey applied for membership of the EU on July 31, 1959. Probably diplomatic and geostrategic concerns played an important role in this application, since Greece had already applied for entry, probably inciting Turkish leaders to take the same road. (See for a detailed account for this period: Mehmet Ali Birand, *Türkiye’nin Ortak Pazar Macerası* (Turkey’s Common Market Adventure), Istanbul, Milliyet Yayinlari 1986.

[3] In a recent book, German social democrat ex-chancellor Helmut Schmidt presented one of the most sincere descriptions of this position, which is quite rare on this topic among European

politicians of the left. (Helmut Schmidt, *Selbstbehauptung Europas - Perspektiven für das 21. Jahrhundert*, Deutscher Verlag Anstalt/Stuttgart - München, 2000); as a summary review of Schmidt's book's see: Muzaffer Darta, "Avrupa Birliği'nin Genişleme Sürecinde Türk-Alman İlişkileri" (Turkish-German relations in the process of European Union enlargement), "Marmara", "Journal of European Studies", pp 191-214.). For another unambiguous formulation of the positions of European centre or centre-left politicians over Turkey's membership see *Le Monde*, 9 Kasım 2002, 'Europe: pour ou contre la Turquie'.

[4] See Oguz, S, "Globalleşme, Avrupa Bütünleşmesi ve Sendikalar" (Globalisation, European Integration and Trade Unions), *Toplum ve Bilim*, 1996, vol 69.

[5] According to Helmut Schmidt, Turkey's acceptance as "candidate member" is the result of two "necessities". Firstly, the EU leaders had to explain their good will towards Turkey, for the former 'European Economic Community' had long relations with this country since the early 1960s. Secondly, there was important pressure from the United States, which wants to see its client state as a member of the EU. (op cit, p 198.).

[6] The MHP (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi / National Action Party) was founded in the late 1960s and developed in the 1970s as a political party of a quasi-typical fascist movement. Banned after the September 12, 1980 military coup, the MHP was refounded and rapidly developed in the 1990s as Turkish nationalism gained impetus while the Kurdish armed struggle continued. The MHP, with its 19% vote, was the second largest party in the country at the April 1999 elections. As for the DSP (Demokratik Sol Parti / Democratic Left Party), it is the party of Ecevit, several times Turkish prime minister and leader of the old CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi / Republican People's Party), which was banned after the coup of 1980. During the 1990s, Ecevit, the former leader of the moderate left, turned into a fierce nationalist and led his party to an electoral victory in April 1999 with 20% of votes cast.

[7] Here it should be noted that in Turkey, references to the so-called "Copenhagen criteria" (or the "criteria of convergence" for the candidate members) always imply some political conditions that aim to develop Turkish democracy - whereas the same list of criteria consists also of complying with the IMF and World Bank propositions, and nobody talks about them since they are quite unpopular.

[8] The ANAP (Motherland party) is the party of Turgut Özal, one time economy minister after the 1980 military coup, later on prime minister (1983-1988) and president (1988-1993).

[9] On "9 May, European Day", a number of Turkish intellectuals, businessmen and politicians published a "manifesto" entitled "The place of Turkey is in the European Union... Yes I agree with that". This manifesto was on the billboards and television. In the meantime, an association that works as a think-tank for the Istanbul Chamber of Industrialists organized a joint meeting with other associations, institutions and even with some trade unions to launch a campaign to accelerate the realization of Turkey's full membership of the EU. In their declaration, they claimed that as mass organizations they represented 17 million people - an enormous exaggeration.

[10] The Erbakan led coalition government had to resign in June 1997, after eight months in office. As a matter of fact, this resignation was nothing more than a likely consequence of the decisions of the National Security Council meeting of 28 February, which was generally considered as an ultimatum by the generals to the Islamist-led coalition government.

[11] Many things have not been disclosed about this event. Yet in his deposition to the public prosecutor before his trial, Abdullah Ocalan declared that he had been arrested by some people who looked like Kenyans (probably by black American secret service agents) and was delivered to the Turkish security officers who were waiting in the airport.

[12] Gilles Kepel, *Jihad, expansion et déclin de l'islamisme*, Editions Gallimard, 2000.

[13] Mesut Yilmaz, several times prime minister, including during the presidency of Turgut Ozal and leader of the Motherland Party, was first and most active among the politicians who almost substituted the subject of Turkish membership of the EU for the entire political program of his Party in order to regain credibility.

[14] The party that had 35% of the votes gained more than two thirds of the seats thanks to the electoral system that excludes parties who get less than 10%. On the other hand, the 7% of votes obtained by the Genc Party (Young Party) was another surprise of these elections. This party had been founded recently by a young and very rich businessman who succeeded in getting support from almost every section of society thanks to his extremely populist and nationalist discourse and intensive propaganda campaign - in the style of Berlusconi in Italy - through several television channels owned by his family.

[15] Approximately six months after the summit, many Turkish papers covered a semi-scandal created by a video film taken during the behind the scene discussions of the summit. The film showed, through the words of the protagonists of the summit, such as Rasmussen, Chirac, Schroeder and Joschka Fischer, the implausibly hypocritical attitudes of the EU leaders towards Turkey's full membership.

[16] The closed session choice was designed to protect AKP deputies personally, who, as loyal believers, were now on the verge of supporting the US military operation against a Muslim country. According to the statutes of the parliament, the votes cast during those sessions cannot be disclosed for ten years. Quite enough time to forget a "sin". According to the newspaper reports of the period, before the parliamentary vote took place, the AKP leader organised a simulated secret vote in the AKP parliamentary group and obtained a majority of "yes" votes. It is quite clear that some deputies who said, "yes" in the simulated vote felt obliged to say "no" during the real one.