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**Updating  
the Debate on Turkey in France,  
on the 2009 European Elections' Time**

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**Programme  
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## Foreword

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Turkey has become a recurrent issue in France's domestic political debate, following the referendum campaign on the European Constitutional Treaty in spring 2005. While the question of Turkish EU membership is itself a point of discussion, evoking Turkey also touches on other sensitive political issues in France. It elicits controversy that goes beyond the Left-Right cleavage. In this article, Alain Chenal\* studies the trend in the evolution of the debate during the campaign for the European elections in June 2009.

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## Introduction

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The issue of relations between Turkey and the Common Market, and subsequently Turkish membership of the European Union goes back to 1963. Since then, it has been the subject of studies, analyses, declarations, sometimes debate, without ever really leading to heated media coverage or marked public opinions, until 2002. A body of diplomatic positions, expressed more or less in hushed terms, had evolved over the years, in relative discretion. What were these? Why and how has the debate become so public from the end of 2002 onwards? Was the debate during the European elections not simply a rehashing of the previous debate which arose in relation to the European “constitution”? How is the question of Turkey viewed today in Paris?

## Positions that have emerged over Time

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As the Cold War redrew the world map after World War II, Turkish leaders were moving towards conservatism. They opted deliberately not for neutrality, but to side with the Western democracies. Turkey thus naturally found its place in the Council of Europe in 1949, and in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) created the 18 February 1952, and subsequently in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In parallel with Greece, Turkey concluded an association agreement with the European Communities on 12 September 1963, which came into force on 1 December 1964 and which set out precise steps for implementing a Customs Union, leading explicitly to membership (Article 28).

In France, the debate was at first limited to restricted circles. Public declarations about Turkey and Turkey's EEC candidature were generally marked by opportunism. Official positioning instrumentalised Turkey, rather than examining the country for its own sake. For public personalities close to NATO, who were especially courted by Turkish diplomats, the country was a valued partner, even though France's political class largely felt itself to be close to Greece. For the fellow travelers of the Warsaw Pact, evoking the Ankara regime and military coups were used as counter-examples to crises in Prague or Warsaw. Ankara paid for Dubcek and Jaruzelski: Nazim Hikmet met Pablo Neruda at the "pantheon" of the Fêtes de l'Huma<sup>1</sup>. Leading liberals, such as Raymond Barre, promoted Turkey at each Davos forum, while grumbling about pressure groups. French diplomacy has a long-standing tradition of being close to Turkey as a European and regional power, as shown by the question of the district (Vilayet) of Alexandrette, and as fostered by personalities such as Maurice Couve de Murville. Turkish diplomacy, notably French-speaking, responded willingly. But the debate rarely went public.

Two Presidents of the French Republic did show themselves to be particularly close to Greece. Some militants may indeed have had the impression of reliving the exaltation of the 1830s, in support of Greece. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing strongly supported the Greek position at the UN Security Council, during the Cyprus crisis of summer 1974, as in his crisis with NATO (September 1974 to October 1980): it was his personal plane which took Constantin Caramanlis, who had been in exile in France from 1963 onwards, back to Athens. It may be recalled that Greece's membership of the EEC was theoretically scheduled for 1984, according to the 1963 association agree-

ment, and very often overall membership negotiations with the three young democracies of Lisbon, Madrid and Athens were discussed.

François Mitterrand had many Greek friends and often visited Greece. Furthermore, he asked Mikis Theodorakis to compose the “official” hymn of France’s Socialist Party “*Changer la vie, ici et maintenant*”, which was launched at the Nantes Congress in 1977. The similar timing of the election victories by the French Socialist Party (PS) and the PSOK in 1981 also reinforced this feeling of closeness. In 1984, the Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou acted as an intermediary between France and Libya over the conflict in Chad, and organized a summit in Crete between François Mitterrand and Muammar al-Gaddafi, though it did not lead to any substantial results. The French President had the feeling of paying much for his trust. Generally speaking, Left-wing governments saw Turkey as a sinister dictatorship on the Right, and the French Communist Party never stopped campaigning against Ankara as a NATO dictatorship, whenever accusations were leveled at the Warsaw Pact.

The 1980s began with much tension between Paris and Ankara. Terrorist attacks by the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) occurred on several occasions against Turkish diplomats and interests in France. The Kurdish cause received much passionate support: the first “Left-wing” Cannes Festival in May 1982 awarded the Palme d’Or to *Yol*, by Yılmaz Güney and the government gave financial support for the creation of the Institut kurde in Paris. Tensions were rising, which was disastrous for France from all points of view, especially for its companies. France had to react.

In 1984, François Mitterrand assigned Etienne Manach, a seasoned diplomat, with the mission of preparing an indispensable improvement in relations, and in a few years the situation changed considerably. Active, French diplomacy did not hesitate to profit from certain periods of tension between Turkey and Germany to advance its interests. The French began to have a better image of Turkey, which had become a major tourist destination. French companies became one of the leading partners in Turkish privatization. The promising role (no doubt overstated) given to Turkey’s dynamism in Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union enhanced its attractiveness as a market. Intellectual exchanges developed. In April 1992, the French President made an important state visit to Turkey, during which he signed the foundation of the French-Speaking University of Galatasaray, which demonstrated the excellence of relations at the time, and which henceforth were only troubled by passing frictions.

Accordingly, it is possible to identify the emergence of a “third” favorable position by official France, beyond the usual Left-Right cleavage. Over the years, the French authorities pursued a policy of rapprochement with Turkey, to the point of being seen as amongst its best allies in Europe. This did not prevent moments of intense ten-

sion, such as when the French Parliament voted a law in January 2001 “publicly recognizing the Armenian genocide”, as well as some clashes with the Turkish Army. Statesmen on the Right, like Raymond Barre, Alain Juppé, Hervé de Charrette, Philippe Séguin, challenged the view of Europe as a Christian Club, and were often backed by many of their supporters, while they were not in power. In the midst of the controversy, President Chirac too confirmed that he did not see why Turkey should not have its place in Europe<sup>2</sup>. He maintained his position<sup>3</sup>, which was accompanied by the great attention he gave to Armenian demands<sup>4</sup>. Both the Right and the Left appeared to oppose, together, the mentioning of “Europe’s Christian origins”, in the text that was being negotiated as the EU’s future constitution. There was a sort of continuity and autonomy of French diplomacy vis-à-vis politics, especially within the context of a Right-wing Parliamentary Majority that was opposed to Turkish membership. It gave the impression of emanating from a kind of “State vision” that paid little consideration to partisan declarations or supposed public opinion.

Turkey formally lodged its candidature to the European Economic Community the 14 April 1987. Can debate about this candidature be postponed forever? This was possible for a long time, thanks to Greek opposition, which allowed France to play a favorable role with no risks. Paris could look good everywhere: saying to the Turks that France supported them (let’s get the contracts!) and sleep peacefully knowing that Greece would stop the issue being raised (let’s get the voters!). The new policy of rapprochement between Greece and Turkey, initiated by their two Foreign Ministers – Iorgos Papandreou and Ismail Cem – and strongly backed by the United States which wanted to see Ankara join the EEC, finally deprived France of its useful alibi. The more the outlook of membership became credible, the more its opponents saw it as a real risk, the more politicians have been felt obliged to speak out: the Right has been predominantly hostile, the Left has been intellectually very split, while official French diplomacy has not stopped putting out positive messages. At this point, former President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing intervened in airing (and setting) durably the terms of the debate, in an interview given to *Le Monde*<sup>5</sup>, the 9 November 2002.

## **A Simplistic Argument, Repeated Ad Nauseam since 2002: “Turkey is not European!”**

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Retrospectively, the key characteristic of this debate is that it has changed so little. It is based on two assertions: Turkey is neither geographically nor historically European. This is accompanied by a deafening silence about Turkish immigration to France. Opponents to Turkish membership have unfailingly reiterated these two pre-emptory assertions, and currently hold the initiative. Apart from a few exceptions, supporters of Turkish membership, appear to be on the defensive, arguing *sotte voce* or ambiguously: membership is far off, conditional, uncertain, though the negotiations underway should not be prejudged. This is despite the fact that Europe has repeatedly given its word solemnly. Good faith is the polite answer to a brutal and definitive No.

A number of more recent factors could have contributed to enrich and change the debate. But this did not happen. In unison with the large majority of public opinion in Europe, Turkey too demonstrated massively against America's projects for war with Iraq in 2003. To the surprise of US strategists, Turkey's National Assembly rebutted its leading ally on 1 March 2003 by refusing right of passage to US troops on its soil. This decision was taken against the official government policy and despite an offer of \$20 billion in financial aid: after so many years of faithful friendship, the Turks rebelled. US troops re-embarked and the generals modified their plans. The episode showed up clearly Turkey's strategic role. Yet in France, it was merely deduced that enlargement would extend the Union's frontiers dangerously, right up to a zone of permanent crisis. After the summer of 2003, the issue of secularism and the wearing of headscarves in France brought Turkey into public debate again: an example of “secularism” for some, an Islamic “Trojan horse<sup>6</sup>” for others. But it was only during the 2009 campaign that this argument was really put forward.

Thus, it was the hypocritical geographic argument which was revived and which set the tone of debate in 2009. Some commentators, aware of how complex and relative History can be, hesitated in getting into the argument. But geography is sure, it is objective: it clearly corresponds to continents, marked out in schoolbooks with different colors, and separated with black lines. The planet Earth can but correspond to the way it is represented by the Inspectors of

Education! Unfortunately, this “objective” argument does not stand up: historians remind us that the frontiers of Europe are relative, and how much the supposed eastern frontier has changed over the centuries, from the Volga, and Don to the Urals and the Caucasus: even if for the Hapsburgs, Budapest was the gateway to the Orient. The debate still goes on among geographers, and at the 9<sup>th</sup> major, annual gathering of French geographers (*Festival de géographie de Saint-Dié-des-Vosges*), held in 1998, the theme was indeed “Europe, a continent of variable geometry”. It may be noted that defenders of the geographic argument do not look at the conception used by the Council of Europe, nor at the continuum which unambiguously links Cyprus to the Bosphorus. In short, geography seems just to be a mask.

Others add that Turkey is not European in history, in geography “*nor in its values*”<sup>7</sup> This phrase has been repeated more and more as time passes. Are these the values stated by the Republic of Turkey, which refers to Rousseau, Jacobinism, democracy and secularism? No. It seems that values here mean heritage, or in other words religion. Here at last we get to the heart of the problem: the absolute frontier that is “*cultural and historical*”<sup>8</sup>. A predominant Muslim country cannot be European, as Europe is a “Christian Club”, to return to the well-worn expression by former Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and must stay within its Christian perimeter. This seems to be the dominant position of the French Right, and is clearly put forward by the UDF and its successors. It is for this reason that this Party, which is ill at ease with the weakening European convictions of the European People’s Party, is hesitating about joining the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in the European Parliament, “whose secular values it does not share [...] and because the UDF does not agree to integrating Turkey into the Union”<sup>9</sup>.

The third characteristic of hostile French views on Turkey and the Union stems from the remarkably limited role of the question of Turkish immigration, especially when compared to electoral campaigns in other European countries. In Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands, rejection of Turkey is based on the supposedly negative experience with Turkish communities that are inward-looking, and incapable of integrating, especially in learning languages. A thousand and one stories, part true, part imagined, nourish these campaigns, following the rhythm of rising Islamophobia in public opinion. Such criticisms have hardly ever been made of Turks in France. For the obvious historical reasons, xenophobia focuses on populations from North Africa, the Arab world and Sub-Saharan Africa. France’s Turkish community seems to be discrete, if not invisible, and its members are considered as hard-working, disciplined, “taken charge of” within the community, and generally not raising any major problems. This is an interesting paradox, because what is strongly criticized in Rotterdam or Berlin, has given the community its immunity in France, and this contrasts with the claims and demands of equal citizenship expressed by our compatriots of Arab or African origin.

## **New Variations on the Same Themes, in the European Elections of 2009**

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The summary manifestos sent by all party lists to each voter (in the Ile de France region) are used here as a reference, in order to try to present as an objective overview as possible of the debate during the campaign of the last European elections. Five lists clearly and strongly mention Turkey, and in each case in negative terms. The others ignore the issue. Given its decisive weight in French politics, the position of the UMP is analyzed separately.

### ***On the Right, the Rejection is Explicit and Brutal***

This is hardly surprising, as it is the stock in trade of hard-Right parties, easily based on sad exaggeration. Turkey comes to represent the Europe they shun. Among its 13 demands, the National Front calls on its voters to “Demand with us... a Europe without Turkey”. The National Center of Independent Employees and Farmers (the Centre national des indépendants et paysans or CNI), which represents a “rebel Right”, ends its manifesto with “... Our roots are Judeo-Christian and our culture is that of human rights. We refuse multiculturalism. We refuse membership of countries, such as Turkey, which do not share our roots nor our values.” The Libertas list, which brings together Philippe de Villiers’s Party and the Hunting, Fishing, Nature and Traditions Party (Chasse, pêche, nature et traditions or CNPT) led by Frédéric Nihous, puts Europe at the top of its agenda, arguing for “a Europe of nations, that are truly European, and without Turkey”. And this is despite the fact that the Irish businessman Declan Ganley, the European inspirer of these lists, is a strong liberal and Atlanticist, who is explicitly favorable to Turkish membership. The national sovereignty list led by Nicolas Dupont-Aignan is even more specific: “They are giving in to Turkey. Despite his speeches, since 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy has given France’s agreement to Brussels opening up negotiations with Turkey on eight chapters. We should break off negotiations and propose having a simple partnership, as with Russia. Let us re-establish the referendum on any new states joining the Union.”

The second feature these parties share is that they present themselves as the only, authentic opponents of the Turkish peril, given that Nicolas Sarkozy has held off blocking all negotiations currently in progress. They claim that this allows him to play a double game. For Philippe de Villiers, the President of the Republic is lulling us to sleep, by “playing the Turkish flute”. To retrieve the voters attracted by Sarkozy since 2007, Jean-Marie Le Pen has described the President as an “incorrigible liar”, stressing that “we [the National Front] have never lied to you”.

The MODEM has a special place among the opponents of Turkish membership. As with the UDF, this movement has never hidden its consistent position. Its most visible candidates, such as Jean-François Kahn, repeatedly stated during the campaign that “it is vital to fix the borders of the Union, which can only lose strength as it expands. On the other hand, we obviously support the idea of offering our close neighbors (Turkey and the Ukraine) a real and major status of partnership. But their membership cannot be accepted as it would make the construction of a political, economic and social union impossible.” However, the issue of Turkey was not included in the MODEM’s manifesto, in contrast to the parties mentioned above. It is as though the party was disgusted by the excessively demagogical dimension of the Turkish specter. The UMP does not exhibit such modesty...

### ***The Enhanced Determination of the UMP: “as the public doesn’t want it!”***

The UMP needs to be treated separately, first because of its decisive political weight. But also because of the way in which it progressively made Turkey into a central issue during the campaign. On 13 January 2005, when Nicolas Sarkozy became president of the party founded by Jacques Chirac, he announced that he would put the Turkish question before all the cadres of the party. *Le Monde* ran a three-column headline the next day: “Turkey, immigration: Sarkozy defies Chirac”. This was accompanied by delightful cartoon by Plantu in which Sarkozy was portrayed as “Is-no-good” the vizier<sup>10</sup>, dressed in a Turkish flag and sticking two knives in the President’s back<sup>11</sup>. In his first speech during the European elections, made at a “republican meeting” in Nîmes on 5 May 2009, the President recalled that Turkey has “no vocation to become a member of the European Union [...] But, Turkey, sharing a degree of common destiny with Europe has the vocation to construct [with Europe] a privileged relationship”<sup>12</sup>. The guidelines were set, and all the leaders of the party followed suit, beginning with Xavier Bertrand: “*The UMP will always say No to Turkey, today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow*”<sup>13</sup>. Apart from the traditional arguments about the frontiers of Europe, or the necessity of fixing limits on the enlargement process, UMP cadres regularly

quote opinion surveys indicating the opposition of a majority of French people to Turkish membership. The use of public opinion, as translated by polls, is neither as constant nor as explicit in any other party. Moreover, the proximity of the elections led the President to re-launch a parallel debate about national identity, backed by a Minister, Eric Besson. While some public personalities are relatively discrete over the issue, others engage it wholeheartedly. Minister Patrick Devedjian declared in a TV interview, for example, that “it is shameful to negotiate with a state with only 38% of its territory in Europe<sup>14</sup>”.

By leaning on this approach, the orators of the UMP do not miss any occasions to call on their adversaries, and above all the Socialist Party, to “speak the truth”<sup>15</sup>. They are not wrong, as the positions of parties on the Left are not unanimous and sometimes remain blurred.

### ***The Range of Nuances and the Low Profile of the Left***

Despite a number of individual attempts, it is hard to find an explicit No to Turkey on the Left<sup>16</sup>. Generally speaking, parties on the Left do not make a major issue of the subject. They do not reason in a one-track manner. They lend both more attention to the benefits membership would bring to Turkey as well as the benefits to the European Union, especially in its relations with the Muslim world. They strongly promote the idea of a “Turkish model”, of a secular, Muslim State. The young spokesperson of Workers’ Struggle (Lutte Ouvrière), Nathalie Arthaud, has clearly come out in favor of membership, in the hope of improving conditions for Turkish workers and as a rejection of fortress-Europe<sup>17</sup>. But it is Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the leader of the Europe-Ecologie campaign, who has expressed himself most warmly on the issue, “supporting the principle of negotiating and ultimately of membership”, fostering and advancing what he calls the “dream of the Bosphorus”<sup>18</sup>. The Communist Party, which was part of the Left Front (Front de Gauche) during the election campaign, says it is generally in favor of membership, whereas the New Anti-Capitalist Party (Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste) stated cautiously that it was for the Turkish people to decide<sup>19</sup>. Jean-Michel Baylet of the (center-left) Radical Left Party (Radical de gauche) has supported the principle of membership, calling integration an “obligation, in order to strengthen democracy in this great Muslim and modern country”<sup>20</sup>.

As for the Socialists, they have adopted three attitudes: timid silence, a no to the “No” and a warm-hearted Yes. The most audible voices have been those of some personalities who have committed themselves to membership, arguing in favor of the mutual benefits it would bring to the Turkish people and to the strength of the Union. This is what former Prime Minister Michel Rocard has put forward, in books, conferences, meetings and debates, against a background, it

should be said of pessimism about the construction of Europe<sup>21</sup>. Such reasoned approval has also been voiced by the former European Affairs Minister, Pierre Moscovici<sup>22</sup>. That said, the dominant position in the PS is a refusal of an outright No, described as “totally irresponsible” (Vincent Peillon<sup>23</sup>), a mere return to the “politics of fear” (Martine Aubry<sup>24</sup>, even if the “priority is first to consolidate the Union” (Henri Weber<sup>25</sup>). From Jacques Delors to Benoît Hamon, everyone agrees on the fact that negotiations should run their course, without any preset view of the outcome. As for the elegant Bartleby, Hubert Védrine, who is known to be very sceptical about new progress in the EU, he has stated that it would have been “more honest” not to open the dossier, but that it is now “impossible and incorrect to change the rules of the game already in progress<sup>26</sup>”.

This nuanced position, which is more realistic than enthusiastic, indicates the scope of progress already made, the mutual advantages, but also the difficulties and risks. It appeals more to reason than demagoguery, to rational analysis than playing to the gallery, and finds much support among analysts. “Let us leave the options open, rather than fix the frontiers of the Union today<sup>27</sup>”.

## The President's “Turkeyesque” Difficulties

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An op-ed article by Nedim Gürsel entitled “Les embarras ‘turquesques’ du Président” published in the daily *Libération* (19 May 2009<sup>28</sup>), has stressed to what extent Turkey has become a permanent source of minor irritation to the French President. Contradictory messages are continuously being sent out, such as the “Turkish Season in France”, launched in the summer of 2009, shortly after it was announced that the Turkish language service of France’s prestigious Radio France International was being closed down<sup>29</sup>.

### *Ministers’ more Nuanced Views*

During the campaign, the leaders of the UMP showed no doubts about their views, though members of the government sometimes do. In a radio interview with France Inter (14 April 2009) Bruno Le Maire, the Junior-Minister of European Affairs, set out the official French position: we do not reject Turkey, but its membership does not fit in with the views we hold of the European Union. When asked to give his personal opinion, he went on to state in a somewhat muddled way that “Bruno Le Maire believes that Turkish membership is not conceivable at present”. His successor, Pierre Lellouche, is known for his commitment to Turkey<sup>30</sup>. He has proposed that the annual Ambassadors’ Conference holds “constructive talks” in order to “avoid an open crisis” and bases itself on the negotiations underway on the 30 Chapters which are compatible with an alternative result to membership. As soon as Pierre Lellouche was nominated, the national sovereignty deputy Nicolas Dupont-Aignan asked the government about the contradictions of its position<sup>31</sup>.

Culture Minister Frédéric Mitterrand showed his interest in the Ottoman Empire, on taking office<sup>32</sup>. As for Bernard Kouchner, ever seeking to defend his image of intransigent sincerity, he announced on RTL radio (7 April 2009) that he had<sup>33</sup> always been favorable to Turkish membership, but had changed his views the previous Saturday at a NATO summit, “because he had been shocked by the pressure exercised by Turkey” against the nomination of Denmark’s former Prime Minister Andres Fogh Rasmussen as future Secretary General of the Alliance. Thus, while Paris seems to be worth a church service, it would appear that a portfolio is worth a Crusade.

A foretaste of such diplomatic reticence was already evident with the revision of the Constitution, the 23 July 2008. In 2005, President Chirac was concerned about the outcome of the French referendum on the European “constitution”. He thus tried to disarm the Turkish issue by adopting a constitutional law on 1 March 2005, making a referendum obligatory in France about by future new membership after Rumania, Bulgaria and Croatia. Accordingly, he bound his successors for short term political advantage. The overall tidying-up of the French Constitution promised by Nicolas Sarkozy seemed to many to be an ideal opportunity to get rid of this shocking French veto, capable of isolating France. But this was a vain hope: the new constitutional text, adopted the 23 July 2008, includes Article 88-5 which confirms that the referendum can only be overridden by very large parliamentary majorities. In other words, the text introduces de facto political discrimination between Turkey, whose possible membership is subject to a veto by French public opinion, and Iceland which may be accepted to the Union on the basis of a parliamentary vote.

## ***Profoundly Divided Europeans***

Views outside France sometimes differ. European antagonisms are progressively hardening on the issue of Turkish membership, which a majority of European governments favor. France is thus likely to experience certain declarations by other Member States as “bad manners”. Having being somewhat badly treated by Paris, the Czech EU Presidency came out strongly in favor of Turkish membership in spring 2009. The same is true for Spain and Italy. Sweden, which took over the Presidency after the Czech Republic, restated its agreement at the highest level, when its Prime Minister visited Ankara (21 April 2009). The Foreign Affairs Minister Carl Bildt also repeated this position forcefully in the *Figaro* (25 May 2009)<sup>34</sup>, to point that the French President, cut to the quick, cancelled his visit to Sweden, planned the 2 June 2009. A few days after a cloudless Franco-British in Evian (6 July 2009), Britain’s brilliant Foreign Minister, David Miliband, came back to the subject in an op-ed article in *Le Monde* (15 July 2009)<sup>35</sup>, pointing out that Turkey, far from being a menace, is an opportunity for Europe.

It was left finally to Angela Merkel, often mocked at the start of Mr Sarkozy’s Presidency and as he was searching for a Franco-British axis, to help France get out of its isolation. While campaigning too, the Chancellor increasingly evoked a “common vision” between France and Germany, suggesting that Turkish membership would be against the interests of Europe. When they meet regularly, both leaders declare jointly that they are against the “unlimited enlargement” of the Union<sup>36</sup>. Thus, the Franco-German axis, having previously suffered from political and economic competition between the two countries, is being revived at the expense of Turkey.

As for the French Presidency of the Union, which is widely considered a success, the Turkish question casts an undoubted shadow.

## ***An American Friend with No Hang-Ups***

But the main challenge is going to come from the United States. There is nothing new in the US position about Europe including Turkey. But the latter now has an important place in America's new diplomacy, brilliantly put together by Barack Obama. Istanbul is one of the places for addressing the new message to the world. Before going there, President Obama declared at the NATO summit on 5 April 2009, and even in Strasbourg on French soil, during the election campaign, to what extent Turkish membership was positive and important. This introduced a note of discord in Franco-American relations which had largely been presented as consensual. Turkey has thus become "the" officially accepted divergence between the two Presidents, and these positions were restated on the sidelines of the D-Day landing commemorations in June. Meanwhile, NATO's new Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, whose nomination Turkey opposed, went to Ankara in September, and to Canossa, to state in what esteem he holds this beautiful and great country, and to ask it for extra help in the Afghan conflict.

## ***The Obstinate Turks***

Such support is not insignificant and reinforces Turkey in its wish, based on law, to refuse any compromise. Turkey's young Minister of European Affairs, Egemen Bağış, has repeatedly stated that "*Turkey will be a full member of the EU or not at all*"<sup>37</sup>. He has added that his country is not asking of charity, but that membership could be "*the solution to 80% of the challenges the Union faces*"<sup>38</sup>. *The relationship with France can only become more tense or worsen, all the more so if France only talks of the famous "privileged partnership", which is hard to define apart from in the words itself, as Turkey already benefits from such a relationship.* On 5 May 2009 in Nîmes, the President of the Republic went one step further in evoking a common economic and security space between the Union and Turkey... and Russia. It is sufficient to recall the centuries of conflict between these two great countries, as well as the strength of Turkey's legal and diplomatic case, compared to Russia's detachment (to say the least) to understand that this proposition is in fact a step backwards which can only be poorly received. Thus, while France's "Turkish Season" is opening, official relations are at their lowest.

## Conclusion

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The profound divisions among European governments on Turkish membership and the static nature of positions can only widen the gap between opinions, day-by-day. This is what the Independent Commission on Turkey – chaired by former Finish President and Nobel Prize Winner Martti Ahtisaari – has termed as a vicious circle in its second report, which was made public in September 2009<sup>39</sup>. One thing is sure; there can be no tranquil status quo on this issue. Beyond the political and legal reasons for bringing Turkey into the Union, a new argument exists henceforth favoring membership, namely the predictable damage which refusal will entail for both parties.

## Notes

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1 Translator's note: Annual festivals of Communist Party and its sympathizers, organized by the newspaper *L'Humanité*.

2 *Le Figaro*, 20 January 2003

3 Jacques Attali (Verbatim II, p.386) relates a strange statement by Chirac, who was Prime Minister at the time, to his Portuguese counterpart Cavaco Silva (30 January 1987): "Turkish immigrants in France are hard workers. Where a French worker earns FF5000, they earn FF15000. They are worth much more than the Greeks. Furthermore this pinko and demagogue Papandreou doesn't like my policy of rapprochement with the Turks. But going from this to letting them into the Community is another matter. It will take time."

4 *Le Monde* published an article, 8 March 1986, entitled: « Une communauté courtisée, les revendications arméniennes font l'unanimité des grands partis politiques ».

5 Arnaud Leparmentier and Laurent Zecchini, « Pour ou contre l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union Européenne », *Le Monde*, November 2002.

6 The title of a book published in February 2004, *La Turquie dans l'Europe, un cheval de Troie islamiste?* by Alexandre del Valle, a key figure of the new Islamophobia (Syrtès)

7 In *Libération*, 16 December 2002, Michel Grésillon strives to demonstrate the geography of anti-membership in an op-ed article entitled « Invisibles Frontières ».

8 See for example the papers of the Member of the European Parliament Jean-Louis Bourlanges.

9 *Le Monde*, 4 February 2004.

10 Translator's note: "Isnogoud" the vizier is a cartoon character by René Goscinny and Jean Tabary, who wants to take the caliph's place.

11 *Le Monde*, 14 January 2005.

12 Antoine Guiral, « Nicolas Sarkozy célèbre son Europe » *Libération*, 6 May 2009.

13 Clément Guillou, « L'UMP dira toujours non à la Turquie dans l'UE, affirme Bertrand », *Lepoint.fr*, 25 May 2009.

- 14 Serge Moati, « Spéciales européennes n°2 », *Ripostes*, France 5, 30 May 2009.
- 15 For example, Roger Karoutchi, deputy Minister for Relations with the Parliament, at the time, in a communiqué dated 2 June, "Qui faut-il croire ?"
- 16 Thus, the philosopher and media-personality Michel Onfray called for a boycott of Turkey, while Ara Toranian has supported the "No by the Left" to Turkey's entry into the EU, 25 May 2009
- 17 Serge Moati, programme quote above
- 18 « Daniel Cohn-Bendit (Europe écologie) vante 'le rêve du Bosphore' », *AFP*, 28 May 2009
- 19 Without forgetting to mention support for the Palestinians
- 20 *AFP*, 18 May 2009
- 21 See for example the debate with Alain Juppé in *Le Figaro*, 3 June 2009.
- 22 « Oui, nous avons besoin de la Turquie en Europe ! », *Le Monde*, 2 June 2009, op-ed article co-signed by Pierre Weill.
- 23 *France Inter et I-Télé*, 5 April 2009, « Dimanche soir politique ».
- 24 Arlette Chabot, A vous de juger, « L'adhésion de la Turquie », *France 2*, 4 May 2009
- 25 Serge Moati, program quoted above
- 26 « Un entretien avec Hubert Védrine », *Le Monde* of 31 May 2009, available on Internet at: [http://www.hubertvedrine.net/index.php?id\\_article=410](http://www.hubertvedrine.net/index.php?id_article=410)
- 27 Bernard Guetta, *Libération* du 20 mai 2009
- 28 Nedim Gursel, « Les désarrois « turquesques » de Sarkozy », *Libération*, 19 mai 2009, available on Internet at: <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/0101568108-les-desarrois-turquesques-de-sarkozy?xtor=EPR-450206>
- 29 « Suppression du turc sur RFI : Erreur stratégique ou choix politique », *Zaman France*, 17 December 2009
- 30 When he was appointed to the government, *Libération* recalled the following statement by Pierre Lellouche to *Le Parisien*, dated 24 September 2004: "We would be crazy to say No to Turkey. It would be a major strategic error. The aim of the Union is not to create a Christian Club, nor a club of the rich, but to unify Europe in peace and prosperity"; in « Un pro-Turquie à l'Europe », *Libération*, p. 6, 24 June 2009
- 31 « Dupont-Aignan demande la position de l'exécutif sur la Turquie », *Lepoint.fr*, 24 June 2009
- 32 « Discours de M. Frédéric Mitterrand, ministre de la Culture et de la Communication, prononcé à l'occasion du lancement de la saison de la Turquie en France », available on Internet at: <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/mcc/Espace-Presse/Discours/Discours-de-M.-Frederic-Mitterrand-ministre-de-la-Culture-et-de-la-Communication-prononce-a-l-occasion-du-cercle-de-la-Revue-des-deux-Mondes>.
- 33 For example in an interview given in *Le Monde*, 13 June 2009
- 34 Carl Bildt, « L'UE a besoin de la Turquie pour peser dans le monde », *Le Figaro*, 25 May 2009
- 35 David Milliband, « Après le G20, comment relancer l'Europe ? », *Le Monde*, 15 July 2009
- 36 « Sarkozy et Merkel plaident pour une « Europe forte », *Le Figaro*, 1 June 2009
- 37 For example, in an interview with *Le Monde*, 13 June 2009
- 38 Interview in *Libération*, on 27 April.
- 39 The Independent Commission on Turkey, La Turquie en Europe : briser le cercle vicieux, September 2009, available on Internet at: [http://www.independentcommissiononturkey.org/pdfs/2009\\_french.pdf](http://www.independentcommissiononturkey.org/pdfs/2009_french.pdf). The report was presented in Paris at a public conference organized by IFRI