

Which way is

ilter Turan



"The conditions that make possible the creation of political democracy may not be the ones that make it possible to sustain it." I have vague recollections of this dictum from a course that I took from the late Dankwart Rustow, when I was a student of his at Columbia University at the beginning of the 1960s. I did not appreciate how profound it was and how applicable to many situations, when I first heard it. Over the years, I have come to understand better that building and sustaining systems, institutions, and even countries, are two related but distinct types of activity. Having succeeded in one does not insure you for success in the other. Nothing demonstrates this better than Turkey's success on the one hand, in building a national economy characterized by increasing industrial production, services and exports; and her failure, on the other, to put that economy on a path where growth, stability and in the end,

economic prosperity can be sustained.

Despite changes over the years, the fundamental features of the Turkish politico-economic environment continue to bear the legacy of the Turco-Ottoman modernization experience. To encapsulate its main features: The state has a powerful place in society. The domain of its intervention in society is not well delineated. State interventionism is supported by a set of institutions that have evolved to exercise control over society. There is a large body of government employees that help implement this domination. Competitive politics is patronage politics. Patronage politics involves the distribution of public resources to private individuals, usually not many in number; it is carried out through a system of state economic enterprises, lucrative government contracts and extending economic support to special constituencies like farmers. In return, the patron expects deference,

in this instance, support for the political party. In analyzing the contemporary economic problems of Turkey as well as its slow progress in meeting the expectations of the European Union, it is important to remember the legacy that needs to change. The point, I trust, will become clearer as we move to a discussion of specific developments.

Having your cake and eating too

Turkey, declared a candidate country for membership in the European Union was required to prepare a National Program in which it would map out the steps it would take and the measures it would initiate to prepare itself for accession negotiations. The preparation of the particular document is up to the candidate country but it is expected that the prospective member will describe within a time frame what it intends to do to conform with the standards to which the Union is



Kemal Derviş

dedicated and to become more like the existing members. In the Accession Partnership prepared by the European Commission and approved by the Council last December, Turkey as a candidate country was given a checklist of points where it needed changes and improvements.

Though determined to become a part of the European Union if judged by the statements of its political leaders and the historical policy of not remaining outside the major institutional developments in Western Europe, the Turkish government was quite slow in producing the National Program. This is understandable in that in a country ruled by a coalition of parties that diverge on many points, it takes time to build consensus. Yet two questions that need answering may also be raised. First, how is it that other candidate countries can move faster than Turkey and build a national

consensus on what they will do so quickly? Secondly, do not the expectations of the EU include mainly items to which a country has already consented to achieve by applying for membership? The answers to these two questions are not the same. But, there is a common thread that runs through them.

For example, it may be suggested that the countries of Eastern Europe have moved much faster to insure their integration into the EU so that they do not constitute a target for another wave of expansion from their East. It may further be added that in these countries, the *ancien régime*, its institutions and cadres had become so discredited that there was little resistance to moving in the direction of integration with the EU. It may then be argued, that Turkey is already a part of the western defense system and therefore feels more secure and therefore less compelled to move at the same pace as the countries of

Eastern Europe. But equally important, it may be pointed out that the Turkish system, despite some shortcomings, have on the whole, delivered enough to its citizens to retain regime support and credibility. Therefore, the Turkish response to candidacy has been more relaxed and ambivalent.

Turning to the second question about the preexisting consensus on membership and whether that does not entail agreement on many of the

The tendency not to move too fast on the EU front is exacerbated by the lack of appreciation of how much the society and the polity have to change to move in the direction of EU membership.

aspects that preparation for membership necessitates, the answer becomes a little more intricate. True, none of the political parties object in principle to Turkey's membership in the Union. Everyone is also aware that certain changes need to be affected in order to prepare the country for membership. Each hopes, however, that those changes that will not bring burdens to their own constituencies will be realized first while the others will be placed on



hold. The natural outcome of this stance is that no one wants to give in, and the country is locked into a situation where no forward movement is easy to achieve. To cite an example, the Nationalist Action Party, had made the implementation of the death sentence for the PKK terrorist chief Öcalan a major issue in its electoral campaign. When it rode an unexpected protest vote wave into the parliament and became a partner in the coalition that had to prepare Turkey for EU membership, it found itself in the difficult position of having to renege on that promise as the EU was absolutely clear that the death penalty had to be abolished in candidate states. Since the implementation of the death penalty has also evolved into an issue of contention within the party, it has not proven possible so far to ban capital punishment.

The tendency not to move too fast on the EU front is exacerbated by the lack of appreciation of how much the society and the polity has to change to move in the direction of EU membership. Earlier institutional linkages with European organizations including the Council of Europe and NATO were more limited engagements. Turkey's joining these

organizations were facilitated by the presence of the Cold War in which Turkey's contribution to western defense was viewed as being critical. Turkish leadership tends to view the EU relationship in similar terms. But both the conditions under which this new relationship has been evolving and its degree of comprehensiveness are so different that it is going to take a long time before political actors all admit to themselves that there is no way around changing.

Finally, there are the institutions of the state: the army, the bureaucracy, the courts, the presidency and even the universities, that have been socialized into an ethic of unconditional national sovereignty, a unitary Turkish state and state domination of society. The EU talk on more democracy, the expansion of individual liberties including cultural rights and the further advancement of the market economy, are expectations that challenge the fundamental political arrangement in Turkey that has a history of more than two centuries. Many Turks see that this arrangement no longer serves the interests of their country and that the dynamism of the economy and society is stifled by the state. Even the state actors admit to the necessity of



The presence of Mr. Derviş in the cabinet was a boost to the program but his awkward political position proved to be both his and the program's Achilles' heel.

change and the need to undo this structure. But, two factors stand in the way. First, what we are talking about is a redistribution of power in society and no actor easily gives the privileges and the power it possesses in the interest of societal betterment. It offers its own justification as to why it should retain its share in terms of societal needs. Second, there is a psychological impediment to change among people that have become conditioned to thinking that if society is left to its own resources, it would go bust.

The result: Turkey continues to move in the direction of Europe but with a speed below that of others. Yet more and more actors are becoming resigned to the inevitability of change. It is not possible to preserve the old system and become a part of the new order.

Throwing the book at...

The ambivalence toward change is not limited to Turkey's relations with the European Union. It has become equally manifest in an area of greater import in the short run: the state of the Turkish economy and what needs to be done to set it straight. The Turkish economic reform program, as shall be recalled, aimed at nothing less than fully transforming the relations between the Turkish state and the Turkish economy. As initially formulated, by stabilizing the exchange rate and announcing in advance its future exchange rates that the Turkish Central Bank would apply at specific dates, the program aimed at bringing inflation under control and reducing the interest rates. In this way, it was assumed that the burden of the public debt on the economy would also be reduced, and conditions for the healthy development of the economy would be created.

The long-term problem of the Turkish economy is too well known to need retelling here. In a nutshell, the Turkish state had been draining a significant portion of the savings in the economy to finance inefficient state economic enterprises that incurred unusually high losses, to finance supportive buying of agricultural commodities at above economically justifiable prices, to extend cheap credit to favored sectors and to provide the politicians with the resources to finance other populist measures. As the needs of the state kept increasing, it had kept borrowing at higher and higher rates of interest to meet them. This policy not only fanned inflation but also brought the country nearer to bankruptcy as the point where the state would no longer be able to service its debt, approached.

The three party coalition led by Mr. Bülent Ecevit had adopted early on an economic reform program which would reduce public expenditures, eliminate the arrangements that generated such a heavy demand for money by the state and restore confidence in the economy. The support of the IMF was secured. Despite difficulties, the program began to move along well. The business community appeared to have confidence both in the program itself and the commitment of the government to go through with it. The inflation began to cool down and the interest rates came down rather rapidly. An air of optimism prevailed over the economy. The first crisis in this euphoric state of affairs came in November of last year. The triggering event involved Demirbank, a private bank that had been buying large amounts of government bonds relying, it appears, on the willingness of some other banks to keep their overnight cash with them. When, suspecting that Demirbank might not be able to return their cash the next day, two of the banks decided not to deposit their money with it. Demirbank turned to the Central Bank, but no support was forthcoming since that would have constituted a violation of the program. That night Demirbank and five others were taken into custody by the Banking Regulatory Agency and turned over to the Banking Insurance Fund. The Turkish Lira began to lose ground rapidly against the dollar. The critical variable on which the reform program had been based, that is a predictable exchange rate, was undermined. In retrospect, it appears that it might have been prudent for the Central Bank to have come to the rescue of Demirbank by being more

flexible about its rules, but the damage was done.

The government tried, nevertheless, to continue with the program, now weakened by what was in effect a devaluation of the Turkish lira. But the developments would not stop there. In mid-February of this year, another political incident broke out, that sent the economy once again into a frenzy. This time, it was an argument that broke out in the National Security Council between the President and the Prime Minister over the question of the constitutionality of an action of the government. Allegedly, the president had gotten upset with the Prime Minister and had thrown (toward?) him a copy of the Turkish Constitution, saying "If you do not know it, then read it!" What is known is that the Prime Minister left the meeting and thus the meeting came to an abrupt end. Rumors spread that the efforts of the Chief of Staff to calm down the Prime Minister and bring him back to the meeting room were to no avail. It may be that the truth of what happened and why it happened will not be known for a long time if ever, but the impact of this event on the markets were clear. The Turkish lira began to lose ground once more against foreign currencies. The fundamental problem was not with the Turkish lira but with the politics of the situation. Simply put, the question was "Can a government quarrelling with the President of the Republic implement the reforms that it had promised to undertake?" What the country faced, in other words, was a crisis of confidence.

The government consulted with the IMF to commence a new reform program. With the value of the dollar

skyrocketing, it was clear that a program anchored to the dollar could not continue. The government was in fact forced to accept the reality that effectively the Turkish lira had undergone devaluation.

Deus ex machina

What is to be done? That was the question. After the reform program so ardently supported by the IMF had run aground, not surprisingly, the Fund was a little apprehensive about moving quickly to extend support to a new program without being sure that it would yield more positive results. In light of earlier experiences, it was generally felt that the Turkish government made commitments to reforms in the midst of an economic crisis but as the economic situation improved, it grew lax about implementing these, especially structural reforms. A new formula had to be devised whereby implementation could be monitored effectively. To tackle the problem, a two-pronged formula was developed. The first part, known from other IMF experiences, was rendering the continuation of credit support to the program contingent on successful implementation of certain reforms.

The second part of the formula was somewhat less usual. It has not been established as to from whom the idea originated, but it was put forth by Prime Minister Ecevit that a successful vice-president of the World Bank, a Turkish citizen, be made the minister of state responsible for economic affairs and thus become a member of the cabinet. He would not only be made responsible for the drafting of the new reform program but also be put in charge of overseeing its implementation. Furthermore, he would serve as the

contact person between the government and the IMF and the World Bank. After consultations with his partners in the coalition, Mr. Ecevit appointed Mr. Kemal Derviş, a capable international servant, as the minister of state responsible for economic affairs.

The appointment was initially met with excitement and relief by the public. The authorities believed that the IMF might come around to being generous with Turkey again. Yet some questions that were barely asked but not answered proved to pinpoint the problematical aspects of Mr. Derviş's presence in the cabinet. The new minister was not elected, had no domestic base of power, no party affiliation. Yet he was to be in a commanding political post, one to which other ministers would have to defer in economic matters although these matters were dear to their heart and political interests. The presence of Mr. Derviş in the cabinet was a boost to the program but his awkward political position proved to be both his and the program's Achilles' heel.

Yes, I go along, but with tears in my eyes

Mr. Derviş's enigmatic presence in the cabinet may have been found disturbing by all ministers to varying degrees, but none matched the personal sense of enmity between him and some of the ministers from the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), most notably Enis Öksüz, the Minister of Transport and Communications. It may be understandable that MHP was a bit more ill at ease about the presence of a non-elected minister who would exercise veto powers in the interest of economic reform over their policy

prerogatives. In contrast to others, they had no previous experience in government and therefore felt frustrated by the many limitations they encountered in their exercise of political power. Their supporters who had high hopes that their interests would finally be served, kept pointing to the fact that the party was delivering little of what they expected. Furthermore, representing a nationalist orientation with a xenophobic bent, they found the arrangement that they had been asked to support a distasteful manifestation of the global economic system, a challenge to their understandings of national sovereignty. But probably none of these reasons are as powerful as the fact that, like all other parties in Turkey, they believed that politics was a game of patronage with a touch of populism. Turkish political parties, without exception, had looked upon politics as a process through which public goods and benefits were distributed among the relatively few political brokers otherwise known as active members of the party. In order to secure the consent of the broader electorate, on the other hand, comprehensive populist measures were used. Mr. Derviş, represented the anti-thesis of patronage politics and economic populism. This was unfair. The MHP had waited for decades to enjoy the power that their more experienced brethren had previously enjoyed, and they were being told "no" by a man whom the international economy had parachuted into ministerial office.

Three MHP ministers were particularly resistant to change. The Minister of State who had the Emlakbank (Real Estate Bank) in his portfolio, did not want to let it go to a consortium of public banks that



Enis Öksüz

would be consolidated and sold. Eventually he did, but not before taking away the Construction Company the Bank owned. The company owned land for housing development and housing projects at various stages of construction as well, some ready for sale. The Minister of Agriculture fought valiantly about offering high support prices for wheat. After a tug of war, he got part of what he wanted and forced the government to look for additional sources of funds to cover the resultant deficit. The Minister of Transport and Communications proved to be the most problematical. He resisted the adoption of measures that were designed to prepare the Turkish Telecommunications Company, Türk Telekom, for privatization. In contrast to his colleagues, however, he constantly uttered remarks in public criticizing Mr. Derviş's presence in government, suggesting it would be better not to have him. He



As Mr. Öksüz volunteered his wisdom to the public, the commitment of the government to the implementation of the program came under question, the markets hit new lows and the value of the dollar new highs.

also made comments about the reform program, often implying that he and his colleagues were not really supportive of it. As Mr. Enis Öksüz volunteered his wisdom to the public, the commitment of the government to the implementation of the program came under question, the markets hit new lows and the value of the dollar new highs. The minister saw the behavior of the market as a conspiracy driven phenomenon against the government in general and his party in particular with which he had nothing to do. He almost brought the IMF support to end by refusing to turn over the management of the Türk Telekom to non-partisan, non-bureaucratic cadres. It was proclivity

to talk too much finally did him in. In mid-July, as the country was going through another critical crisis of confidence with the dollar soaring, Mr. Minister was yackety yacking about his views on television. A little later, Vice Premier Bahçeli, the head of the MHP, invited his colleague for a personal chat and politely asked him to submit his resignation.

In all fairness, it has to be pointed out that the MHP is not alone in expressing its ambivalence about the economic reform program though its rhetoric and style may be less polished than others in government. The Minister of State for Privatization from the Motherland Party, Mr. Yüksel Yalova, resigned after a law cutting price subsidies to tobacco was submitted to Parliament. True to form, the minister also went into air to register his disenchantment with the draft law. He was invited by Vice Premier Mesut Yılmaz, the head of the Motherland Party and asked to submit his resignation. Need it be said that the minister came from a district in which tobacco growing was a major occupation.

The government has punctured holes in its own program in many ways. For example, the workers of the mostly inefficient and loss generating state economic enterprises received a reasonable boost in pay when the national federation of labor representing them threatened to strike, a possibility which the government did not find timely or appealing. Civil servants were also given raises which, many felt, exceeded the amounts allowed by the reform program.

Ambivalent or not, with prodding from the IMF, friendly countries and domestic pressures, the government is slowly dismantling economic

structures and abolishing economic practices that have existed for a long time. It is not pleasant. Many are losing the good life they enjoyed, politicians are confused about what they are supposed to do when patronage and economic populism is gone, but there is no other way out. Resisting change, many see, will lead to economic disaster. The outcome is best described by a Turkish expression that depicts a person who is obliged to do things which he does not want to: "Yes, I go along, but with tears in my eyes!"

Operation mop up!

Corruption is a phenomenon that the world is becoming more and more familiar with every day. It used to be the assumption that corruption was an ailment found in less developed societies while the developed world was reasonably free of it. Recent revelations, however, about Helmut Kohl and Jacques Chirac among others, leaves no doubt that no society is spared of it even at the highest levels of government.

In recent years, many observers have noted that corruption has been on the rise in Turkey while a corresponding effort on the part of the government to fight it has not taken place. Some felt that the official reluctance to combat the phenomenon derived from the fact that major politicians were among its beneficiaries or even worse, among its perpetrators. The accident at Susurluk several years ago, had spilled out the unusual connections between politicians, security agencies, the underworld etc., but nothing major had come out of it. All this had begun to change during the last two years. The change was, to a large extent, attributed to the appointment of Saadettin Tantan as the minister of

interior. Mr. Tantan, coming from a police background, moved quickly after assuming office to direct his troops against corruption and criminal activity in the economic domain. He was aided in his endeavors by the supportive disposition of the National Security Council which had elevated corruption to a higher order of risk than before, taking precedence over terrorism, and by the Gendarmerie, the rural police organization technically under the direction of the ministry but in fact a branch of the military.

The drive against corruption soon began to produce shocking suspects. The nephew of the former President Demirel was taken in, wearing handcuffs for having funneled funds from a bank he owned to his personal use. Others soon followed. Some of the most shocking incidents of people being taken into custody for questioning involved the bureaucrats, especially those from the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources who, allegedly, had given out contracts at high prices in return for kickbacks. Each day, it appeared that some new case of possible corruption was being revealed. The public appeared to be highly supportive of the crusade. The man on the street began to think that something was finally being done.

Yet there were problems. In many instances, the police or the gendarmes raided places and arrested persons without sufficient evidence that these persons had committed a crime. Many of the law enforcement personnel as well as members of the judiciary were not well trained in the identification of economic conspiracies. The judiciary did not have enough attorneys to process possible evidence. Suspects were kept in custody for a long time and then

released without being told specifically what they had done or what they were accused of. There was some evidence that the law enforcement people had been less than careful in the collection of admissible evidence. Eavesdropping on phones without legal authorization was one of the cases in point.

Soon, complaints had begun that with the heavy handed way the anti-corruption drive was being handled, no bureaucrat was willing to make a decision and sign any papers. It was pointed out that people were taken in with fanfare but no serious charges were brought against them and they were released, but people remembered their being taken into custody but did not note that they had been released. The proclivity of some public attorneys to make statements that would prejudice their case weakened the drive and created the impression that there was some kind of a vendetta going against specific persons. The Minister of Interior enjoyed producing imprecise, puzzle ridden sentences that led to speculation as to who was next. But more important than all this, Mr. Yılmaz, the head of the Motherland Party became less and less comfortable about his minister. The "White Energy Operation" that had focused on the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources had led to the resignation of a minister who was very close to Mr. Yılmaz. The minister had failed, at best, to keep the bureaucrats under him under control. At worst, he himself was implicated in some of the questionable affairs that had taken place at the ministry. Mr. Yılmaz began to be openly critical of the Minister of Interior, but could not remove him since such an act would



appear to subvert the anti-corruption drive. Then he got his chance. When the Minister of State for privatization resigned to protest the Tobacco Law, he moved Mr. Tantan to another post, bringing in a more trusted associate of his to the Interior Ministry. Mr. Tantan did not accept the change and resigned both from his new position and his party. He has since disappeared from the public eye. Some suggest that he is preparing to launch a new political movement.

And what happened to the anti-corruption drive? Those against whom proceedings had started earlier continue to be under arrest and some are already being brought to trial. But the agenda has now moved to economic crises. If the economic reform program is successful, many of the instruments and institutions which allowed corrupt practices to be carried out will have been abolished. "Operation Mop Up!" however, has slowed down considerably.



The division of the Islamic party into two may indicate in itself that religious politics will become less relevant in the near future.

Raze it and it grows more

For the fourth time, one of the major Turkish political parties was closed down for having used religion for political purposes. The Turkish transformation led by a bureaucratic-political elite has aimed at modernization, often a synonym for westernization. Opposition to the modernization policies had often taken religious coloring, leading the founders of the republic to pursue a very strict understanding of secularism. Political parties openly demanding a role for religion in the political life of the country have always been viewed with suspicion as the anti-thesis of the modern state that the founders of the republic were trying to create. Political movements promoting a more assertive role for religion in politics initially appeared as factions within right-wing and center right parties, but after 1969, they came unto their own. In 1969, the first such party, the National

Order Party(NOP) was established only to be closed down by the Constitutional Court later. NOP was replaced by the National Salvation Party whose performance in the 1973 and 1977 elections produced a parliamentary arithmetic that rendered it a member of all coalition governments until the 1980 military intervention.

The military rulers, in an effort to build a new party system abolished all parties, including the NSP. After competitive politics was restored in 1983, the Welfare Party was born. It enjoyed enough popular support to come out as the leading party after the 1995 elections. The WP even managed to lead the government during the late 1990s. In the end, it could not escape the fate of its predecessors, it was closed down by the Constitutional Court for having used religion for political ends. The leader of the Party, Mr. Necmettin Erbakan and four of his colleagues were banned from politics for five years. In an ironic twist, Mr. Erbakan, a life-long opponent of all things Western applied to the European Court of Human Rights to repeal the Constitutional Court's decision. In a historical ruling the ECHR upheld the decision and killed Mr. Erbakan's hopes for an early return to politics at the tender age of 76. When the Welfare Party was closed down, it reappeared, true to its tradition, under the new name of Virtue Party. Once again, keeping to tradition, the Virtue Party too was closed down by the Constitutional Court in June. But, being old hands in going out of existence in one form but reappearing in another, the Virtue Party had already given birth to the party of Felicity at the time of this writing.

While efforts to keep a party that

brings religion overtly into politics has so far not succeeded, the movement itself has lost its unity for the first time. A significant number of MPs who were resentful of the efforts of Mr. Erbakan, the chief of the National Salvation and Welfare Parties, and the behind the scenes leader of the Virtue Party, to treat the party as a personal tool and not allow for the renewal of leadership, have proceeded to form a new party. For the proponents of the so-called "Renouveau," their new party would be different. It would not put religion at the center of their party program. It would embrace the basic tenets of the secular republic and it would focus more intensely on social and economic justice, among other things. The new Party was finally founded and took the name of Justice and Development Party. The former mayor of Istanbul, Mr. Tayyip Erdoğan, who leads all opinion polls for political leadership, became its leader. Although he was also banned from politics and already served time in jail, Mr. Erdoğan benefited from a recent ruling by the Constitutional Court and could thus reenter active politics though this interpretation continues to be contested.

The division of one party into two may indicate in itself that religious politics will become less relevant in the near future. The appearance of a party that promises to pursue a new political line appears in part a generational phenomenon. But, it also shows that a significant number of MPs, after having seen their party closed down several times, have come to think that a moderate line more in conformity with the level of social sophistication Turkey has reached, may be a more appropriate way to

pursue than the old fashion "religionism" the old guard continues to advocate.

It comes in more radical forms too!

The Courts can close down Islamic political parties, but the radical religious terrorist movements are another matter. About a year ago, raiding a house in a wooded area in the outskirts of Istanbul, the police, in addition to the capture of some Hizbullah militants, chanced upon the archives of the organization. Within a short period, police raids uncovered an underground gang of religious terror that would torture or kill opponents and deserters and bury them in parts of the buildings where they were hiding. Many who were either outspoken defenders of hard line secularism or defenders of another interpretation of religious doctrine were identified as targets to be cleared.

The police, using the information it had obtained, dealt many blows to the Hizbullah. It is the established behavior of terrorist organizations, however, to stage a spectacular deed just as everyone is coming to think that they are eradicated, in order to show that they are alive and well. The deed that Hizbullah staged was an attack on the Director of Security of the Province of Diyarbakir. The Director, Gaffar Okan, who was deeply loved by the public, happened also to be one of the important figures in tracking the Hizbullah and locating its organizational center. He was attacked by several gunmen as he was being driven to his office in a non-armored car (against recommendations that he use his armored automobile.) He died instantly and all the gunmen managed to get away. Mass demonstrations of

support for Mr. Okan and the large crowds at his funeral testified to his personal popularity. Working on scant clues, the police gradually identified the shooters, all militants of the Hizbullah. Some of them have already been caught and others will inevitably suffer the same fate at some future date.

The incident, in addition to reminding Turks that religious terrorism continued to present a challenge, if a declining one, that their society had to meet, showed that a police chief who establishes a successful dialogue with the people of the city he serves, who treats and serves them well, may become a hero in an area which was at one time thought to be the center of PKK activities.

Pipe dreams

During a recent Energy Conference organized by Cambridge Energy Associates in Istanbul, it was announced that the decision to build a pipeline to carry Caucasus and Central Asian oil to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan from Baku through Azerbaijan and Georgia had been finalized. After many years of studies, uncertainties, discussion of alternative routes, costs etc. this was good news the Turks thought. Although one should always retain a sense of healthy skepticism about energy projects and believe something only after it is done, there are sufficient grounds for such a pipeline to be built. As Turkey goes through economically difficult times, it is heartwarming to hear that a major project that had also evolved into a national dream, may be on its way to realization.

İlter Turan is the president of Istanbul Bilgi University