
 Paris, 05 December 2014

Turkey and its neighbours

20th Plenary Meeting of the Club of Three

An event organised in partnership with Global Relations Forum with the generous support of Robert Bosch Stiftung

SUMMARY

The Club of Three's plenary meeting in December focused on Turkey, Europe's key partner in addressing strategic challenges arising from a vast region spreading from Ukraine to countries including Syria, Iran and Libya.

This reflects the greater attention given to some of the world's largest economies at Club of Three meetings, as well as Turkey's geopolitical importance and growing influence in the Middle East. The multiple crises that have erupted in this region have also

propelled it to the top of the political agenda, requiring urgent debate on how to stabilise this highly volatile situation.

It is against this backdrop that the Club of Three teamed up with Global Relations Forum (GRF) to bring together politicians and business leaders from Europe and Turkey for its plenary meeting that took place in Paris on the 5th of December 2014.

Founded in 2009 with the support of Turkish leaders in business, government and academia, GRF is an independent, non-profit membership association that promotes and facilitates debate between its members and other interested individuals on all matters related to international affairs and global issues.

The meeting, entitled 'Turkey and its neighbours', was held at the Quai d'Orsay, thanks to the support of French Foreign Affairs Minister Mr. Laurent Fabius. Some 60 politicians and business leaders from France, Germany, the UK and Turkey discussed issues of common interest and concern such as the Syrian conflict and trade relations. The aim was to highlight areas where Europe and Turkey could cooperate more closely.

In the evening, the participants continued their discussions over dinner

Below, from left to right: A view of the Quai d'Orsay; Özdem Sanberk. At the bottom: İltur Turan; Xavier Chatel (speaking) and Yavuz Canevi



AGENDA

Friday 05 December

Welcome from Lord Simon of Highbury and Memduh Karakullukçu, President of Global Relations Forum

Session I:

EUROPE, TURKEY AND ITS NEIGHBOURS:
COLLABORATING IN A NEW SECURITY
ENVIRONMENT

Chair: **Hikmet Çetin**
Keynote Speakers: **Xavier Chatel**
Alex Carlile
August Hanning
Yaşar Yakış

Buffet Lunch

Session II:

INVESTMENT AND GROWTH: TECHNOLOGY,
ENERGY AND MARKETS

Chair: **Eberhard von Koerber**
Keynote Speakers: **Günter Verheugen**
Shahin Vallée
Yavuz Canevi

Coffee break

Session III:

SESSION III: MANAGING THE PRESSURES
OF MIGRATION

Chair: **Bridget Kendall**
Keynote Speakers: **İlter Turan**
Sema Meray
Jean-Marie Le Guen

Dinner

Welcome from British Ambassador Sir Peter Ricketts

Keynote speaker: **Laurent Fabius**

at the British Embassy, where they were joined by Ambassador Sir Peter Ricketts and Mr. Laurent Fabius.

The meeting concluded that, despite the stalemate in EU-Turkey relations in recent years, both sides would benefit from greater collaboration in areas including anti-terrorism.

Some participants expressed concern about mixed signals from the Turkish government vis-à-vis Europe and the negative consequences this might have on political and economic cooperation. Others deplored the current lack of impetus in Europe for moving forward with talks on Turkey's EU accession.

But the meeting reflected a strong view that Europe and Turkey's future are linked, and that they should look beyond political disagreements to establish a more solid and enduring relationship based on mutual trust.

Right, top: Yavuz Canevi, Charles de Croisset and Metin Fadilloğlu

Right, bottom: Eberhard von Koerber and Günter Verheugen



SESSION I

EUROPE, TURKEY AND ITS NEIGHBOURS: COLLABORATING IN A NEW SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The plenary meeting began with a morning session on the region's security environment and the threat posed by the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Discussions focused on the kind of intervention needed to bring peace and stability to the region, as well as the issues on which Europe and Turkey could work together.

A French participant gave an assessment of the situation on the ground and presented France's position on ISIS, which it calls by its Arab name, "Daesh", to highlight that it is a terrorist group and not a state. He listed the actions that France was taking in the fight against ISIS, ranging from air strikes to a 'train and equip' programme in Syria. He also pointed to domestic measures including the introduction of a law in November 2014 that imposes travel restrictions on foreign fighters.

Another participant noted that many foreign fighters operating in Syria had come in from other European countries including Germany and the UK.

Several participants stressed how difficult it was to improve the security

of the region given the complexity of the situation on the ground. One of them pointed to the multitude of militias with different agendas operating at the local level, including the Free Syrian Army, ISIS and Al Qaeda-linked groups. Bashar al-Assad, who was working to strengthen his power in big cities such as Aleppo, was also increasingly behaving like a local warlord, he noted.

The situation was further complicated by the fact that there was a lack of clear commitment from key international players, a Turkish participant added. The US was unwilling to commit ground troops while the EU did not have a united approach to the Syrian crisis. In the Arab world, Saudi Arabia finds itself in a difficult position because the ISIS ideology is very close to the one that is taught in Saudi schools, another participant noted.

Greater cooperation on security

One of the main messages that came out of the morning session was the need to strengthen cooperation between intelligence services and law enforcement authorities in Europe and Turkey so as to reinforce border controls and stem the flow of foreign fighters travelling to Syria.

The security of the region will not improve without Turkey's active involvement, many European



Left: Lord Simon of Highbury addresses the plenary during his welcoming remarks



From left to right:
 Bridget Kendall,
 Xavier Chatel, Yaşar
 Yakış, Matthew Kirk,
 Sönmez Köksal and
 Eberhard von
 Koerber

participants agreed. On the Turkish side, several participants stressed that the relationship between Europe and Turkey should be more balanced, pointing out that there was sometimes too much emphasis on what Turkey was or was not doing. Europeans also needed to play their part in tightening border controls and tackling the radicalisation of young Muslims.

A French participant pointed out that the relationship between France and Turkey had much improved in recent months. “We now see eye-to-eye on many issues with Turkey”, he said.

Several participants stressed that this favourable wind should be utilised to bring Turkey into EU security structures through alignment of strategies and priorities. A Turkish participant agreed the two countries shared a common view on the Syrian crisis.

But noting that tightening border controls was not enough, several participants from Europe and Turkey stressed the need to develop a powerful counter narrative to challenge ISIS propaganda. A UK participant noted that governments in Europe have a poor record when it comes to combating ISIS’s very successful online recruitment drive. The private sector is best placed to make an effective contribution in this area, he said. A senior member of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) which runs the Club of Three programme agreed, adding that initiatives such as the partnership between ISD and Google Ideas to

support counter narratives already existed. A partnership with Turkey to find voices that carry credibility with young Muslims could also be very successful, she said.

A participant highlighted Turkey’s NATO membership but he asked whether the anti-Western sentiment that is occasionally voiced in the country should be a concern. A Turkish counterpart reassured the participants but emphasised that a commitment to Turkey’s EU membership would help further solidify ties with the West.

Breaking the stalemate

There was a clear agreement at the meeting that the Syrian crisis must be resolved before ISIS could be defeated because terrorist groups such as ISIS had risen from the collapse of the state. One of the French participants noted that the crisis would not resolve itself simply by playing the different Syrian factions against each other.

Many agreed that the priority was to remove Bashar al-Assad from power. A deal with the Free Syrian Army to keep Assad in place would risk fuelling extremism in Syria, with many Free Syrian Army fighters joining terrorists groups such as ISIS, one said.

An area of consensus was that no settlement would be possible without involving Russia and Iran. A Turkish participant noted that Russia’s approach of introducing more moderate elements into the Assad regime had failed.

One of the UK participants asked whether Iran might be persuaded to take a different position now that its relationship with the US was improving and that a nuclear deal with the West was in sight. For a French participant however, a nuclear deal might have a negative short term impact on Syria because it would free large sums of money in Iran that could be used to support the Assad regime.

For several participants, the ‘elephant in the room’ was the issue of national borders agreed under the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916. Borders needed to be redrawn to take better account of the ethnic and religious divide in Syria. But who would shoulder this difficult task, one asked? A Turkish participant said that current boundaries with some adjustments should be maintained to contain internal conflicts.

SESSION II

INVESTMENT AND GROWTH: TECHNOLOGY, ENERGY AND MARKETS

Participants turned to economic matters during the first afternoon session. This was an opportunity to reiterate that Europe and Turkey are important trading partners and discussions quickly centered around the stalled EU accession process.

Several participants deplored that economic ties between Europe and Turkey were relatively weak despite significant business opportunities that could be exploited. The mixed signals on accession emanating from several European countries had contributed to a cooling of relations between the two sides but Turkey’s at times confrontational political rhetoric had also played a part.

A European participant added that companies in sectors such as energy and pharmaceuticals were finding it more difficult to do business in Turkey.

LIST OF ATTENDEES

Leyla **ALATON** *ALARKO Group of Companies* | Hakan **ALTINAY** *Global Civics Academy and The Brookings Institution* | Pekin **BARAN** *Denizcilik AS* | Patricia **BARBIZET** *Artemis* | Marguerite **BÉRARD-ANDRIEU** *BCPE* | Joachim **BITTERLICH** *ESCP Paris Business School and formerly Veolia Environment Germany* | Şule **BUCAK** *Communications Consultant* | Bertrand **BUCHWALTER** *French Foreign Affairs Ministry* | Yavuz **CANEVİ** *TEB and formerly Central Bank of Turkey* | Lord **CARLILE** *of Berriew House of Lords* | Hikmet **ÇETİN** *Formerly Grand National Assembly and Foreign Affairs Ministry, Turkey* | Charles **DE CROISSET** *Goldman Sachs International* | Metin **FADILIOĞLU** *Group 29* | Judit **GOLDSTEIN** *German Embassy, Paris* | Orhan **GÜVENEN** *Bilkent University, Turkey* | August **HANNING** *Formerly Federal Ministry of the Interior and Bundesnachrichtendienst, Germany* | Sasha **HAVLICEK** *ISD* | Alexandra **HENDERSON** *ISD* | Memduh **KARAKULLUKÇU** *Global Relations Forum* | Bridget **KENDALL** *BBC* | Matthew **KIRK** *Vodafone* | Eberhard **von KOERBER** *Eberhard von Koerber AG* | Sönmez **KÖKSAL** *Formerly Turkish National Intelligence and Foreign Affairs Ministry, Turkey* | Armand **LAFERRÈRE** *AREVA, France* | Jean-Marie **LE GUEN** *French Minister for Relations with Parliament* | Sir David **LOGAN** *British Institute at Ankara and formerly British Ambassador to Turkey* | Markus **LUX** *Robert Bosch Stiftung* | Michael **MACLAY** *Montrose Associates and ISD* | Sophie-Caroline **de MARGERIE** *Conseil d’État, France* | Sema **MERAY** *German Playwright and Actress* | Dominique **MOISI** *French Institute for International Relations* | Anne-Elisabeth **MOUTET** *Columnist and features writer, France* | Andreas **NICK** *Bundestag, Foreign Affairs Committee* | Ali **ONANER** *Turkish Embassy in Paris* | Güven **ÖZALP** *Hürriyet Daily* | Murat **ÖZÇELİK** *Republican People’s Party and formerly Turkish Ambassador to Iraq* | John **PEET** *The Economist* | Hella **PICK** *ISD* | Peter **REUSS** *German Embassy, Paris* | Antoine **ROSTAND** *Schlumberger Business Consulting* | Gülsün **SAĞLAMER** *Istanbul Technical University* | Özdem **SANBERK** *International Strategic Research Organisation Ankara, and formerly Foreign Affairs Ministry, Turkey* | Lord **SIMON** *of Highbury GDF Suez and ISD* | Bernard **SPITZ** *French Federation of Insurance Companies* | Norman **STONE** *Bilkent University, Turkey* | İlter **TURAN** *Bilgi University, Turkey* | Füsun **TÜRKMEN** *Galatasaray University, Turkey* | Shahin **VALLÉE** *French Economy Ministry* | Günter **VERHEUGEN** *Viadrina University and former European Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry* | Serge **WEINBERG** *Sanofi, France* | Yaşar **YAKIŞ** *STRATIM and formerly Foreign Affairs Ministry, Turkey* | Selim **YENEL** *Turkish Ambassador to the EU* | Durmuş **YILMAZ** *Formerly Central Bank of Turkey* | Ayşe **YÜKSEL** *Chadbourne and Parke LLP*

Taking small steps

Business sector representatives suggested that Europe and Turkey should take a number of small but positive steps to reassure investors, while trying to resolve bigger issues such as EU accession. One participant said there should be more focus on energy projects such as the construction of nuclear power stations in Turkey.

To boost trade activities, a former member of the European Commission said that Turkey's Customs Union agreement with the EU could be extended to cover more goods and services. EU funds for R&D and training programmes could also play a key role, and Turkey should be part of the new Energy Union. But these initiatives should not replace the EU accession process, he said. His remarks were welcomed by Turkish participants.

A British industrialist also agreed that Turkey should be part of the Energy Union. Nuclear power for example, which Europe could help further develop in Turkey, was vital to its security of supply. An agreement was also needed on oil supplies to the EU through and from Turkey. One Turkish participant added that Turkey and the EU could develop a common strategy on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).

Some European participants emphasised that Turkey's integration into the global economy had succeeded due to, among other things, the reforms of the banking system. One participant also underlined that Turkey's interests should be taken into account during Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations with the US.

The flexibility of the Turkish economy could serve as a basis for a stronger Turkish-European economic partnership, one participant added.

The EU's future: Turkey's role

The discussion then turned to the future of the EU, with some participants offering their views on how a Europe with Turkey could look. For example, a French government adviser said he could see Turkey being part of an EU made up of several concentric circles, with the Eurozone as its core. Countries like Turkey would be in the outer ring alongside other single market members with looser political ties.

Some UK participants, however, said it would be risky to have such a large and growing economy like Turkey sitting in the periphery.

This session then ended with the recognition by European members that "keeping Turkey on board" was the best way of aligning its priorities and interests with European partners.

Below, left: Memduh Karakullukçu and Sema Meray
At the bottom: Shahin Vallée (centre), İlter Turan (left) and Eberhard von Koerber



SESSION III - MANAGING THE PRESSURES OF MIGRATION – AND DINNER

The last session dealt with migration and integration issues in both Turkey and Europe, including the refugee crisis caused by the conflict in Syria.

A Turkish academic started the discussion by describing the scale of the challenge that Turkey faced due to the large number of Syrian refugees that had crossed its border since the beginning of the conflict. According to estimates, there were about 1.5 million refugees from Syria in the country, with between 150,000 and 170,000 Syrians from the Kobane region alone. This was causing great tension in some areas of Turkey, several participants noted.

Turkey was spending \$4.5bn to cope with the situation, a major humanitarian effort praised by a French participant who had recently visited Turkey. He stressed that France was willing to help Turkey in this area.

One Turkish participant said that some countries in Europe were not doing enough to help refugees. One country in particular has only welcomed 250 of them so far, he said.

A Turkish government representative explained that Turkey had never faced such high levels of immigration before. The government is expecting many of them to stay in the country, at least for

a while, even after the crisis was resolved. This meant creating the infrastructure for the refugees to access healthcare services and schools etc, all of which would increase the cost of social welfare. A plan was being put in place to prepare for this, he said, adding that Turkey could benefit from similar experiences in countries such as France and Germany. Several participants underlined the importance of cooperation between Turkey and Europe with respect to immigration.

One participant noted that migrants are less likely to integrate when they moved to a country for economic reasons without intending to stay long term. This was the case for the Turkish population in Germany for example. Another participant pointed out that governments needed to invest in integration at an early stage or face significant costs not only to welfare but criminality or radicalisation later on.

Another participant stressed that most of the focus in Europe had been on vertical integration through access to public institutions and services. However, there should be more emphasis on horizontal integration within local communities.

One UK participant added that Europe needed to develop a sensible narrative highlighting the benefits of immigration to combat the negative and simplistic message spread by populist groups that were dominating the airwaves.

Right, bottom:
Participants discuss the meeting's outcome during an evening reception at the British Embassy





During dinner at the British Embassy, French Foreign Affairs Minister Mr. Laurent Fabius reaffirmed France's commitment to finding a solution to the Syrian conflict and the strong relationship that his country was now enjoying with Turkey.

Creating a safe zone in Syria where Syrians fleeing war could take refuge was of utmost importance, he said, adding that the urgent test for the international community was to protect the city of Aleppo from plunging into total chaos. "Abandoning Aleppo would be condemning Syria to decades of violence and would mean the death of any political future".

Regarding economic matters, the French Minister said that Turkey was a very important trading partner. He also urged progress on chapters 23 and 24 of the EU's accession process dealing with basic EU values: fundamental rights and freedoms.

The Turkish Ambassador to the EU, Selim Yenal, who was among the dinner guests, also stressed that strengthening ties with the EU remained a major priority for Turkey.

The Ambassador showed optimism about the prospects for more fruitful cooperation between the two sides, noting an increase in the number of bilateral meetings taking place in Brussels and Turkey. "We want to feel part of the family", he concluded.

CONCLUSION

The plenary meeting was an opportunity for participants to take stock of the state of the EU-Turkey relationship amid growing concerns that it was losing its lustre at a time when it can uniquely serve shared strategic objectives.

One of the main messages that came out is that, although frustrations were present on both sides, the relationship should not be allowed to stall since Europe and Turkey shared common interests in many areas. Civil society partnerships could fundamentally help that process, it was highlighted.

The day of meetings provided an excellent basis for the renewing of contacts and the forging of new ones between all participants.

European participants reaffirmed that Turkey was a very important partner. There was general agreement to call for greater cooperation on security and economic matters.

Turkish participants welcomed the positive comments made by the Europeans with some stressing that Turkey should be more integrated in EU structures as the shared neighbourhood faces a more unstable and uncertain future.

Overall, the meeting reaffirmed the need for the EU and Turkey to find areas where progress could be achieved. This in turn would help build what all participants sought – mutual trust.

Top, from left to right:
Monsieur Laurent Fabius
and Ambassador Yenal
talk about EU-Turkey
relations during dinner