Report on the Mission to Turkey and Belgium

Council of American Ambassadors Delegation

The Council of American Ambassadors sponsored a mission to Turkey and Belgium from September 21-October 5, 2002. The delegation, which included eight former United States (US) Ambassadors [See Annex], visited Ankara, Istanbul and Brussels. The purpose was to investigate Turkey’s political and economic situation and its relations with the US, particularly as an ally in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the international coalition against terrorism, and to learn more about the European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the enlargement processes underway in NATO and the European Union (EU), including Turkey’s pending application for EU membership.

Besides briefings with US Ambassadors W. Robert Pearson (Ankara), Stephen F. Brauer (Belgium), Rockwell A. Schnabel (EU) and R. Nicholas Burns (NATO), Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Robert Deutsch (Ankara), Consul General David Arnett (Istanbul), DCM Dr. Jay Foster (EU), and the Embassy/Mission and Consulate country teams, the delegation met with host country government and EU and NATO officials at the highest level. Our interlocutors in Turkey included: His Excellency Masum Turker, State Minister of the Economy; Under Secretary Yurdakul Yigitguden, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources; Under Secretary Sitki Ugur Ziyal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Solmaz Unaydin, Director General for Policy Planning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Ali Tuygan, Deputy Under Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; members of TUSIAD (Turkish Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association) and DEIK (Foreign Economic Relations Board) and officials of the Istanbul Stock Exchange.

In Belgium, the delegation met with General Joseph W. Ralston, SACEUR/CINCEUR; His Excellency Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission; His Excellency Javier Solana, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union/High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy; His Excellency Oguz Demiralp, Turkey’s Ambassador to the EU; NATO Deputy Secretary General Alessandro Minuto Rizzo, Deputy Chairman of NATO’s Military Committee Vice Admiral Malcolm I. Fages and Ambassador Ahmet Uzumcu, NATO Permanent Representative of Turkey.

Although we visited each city for a relatively short period of time (approximately three working days per locale), delegation members came away from their experience with several lasting impressions.

First, Turkey, a friend of the US and the only NATO ally with a predominantly Muslim population, continued to play a key strategic role at the crossroads of Europe and Asia and in the war against terrorism. The modern Turkish state, founded by Ataturk from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire upon the principles of democracy, Westernization and secularism, offers a viable model for other countries in the region, particularly Afghanistan where Turkey, as the leader of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), is...
assisting in the rebuilding process and in ensuring that terrorists never again find a home there.

Second, Turkey has stayed the course of its International Monetary Fund (IMF) reform program. As a result, it appeared that the nation of 70 million people was beginning to emerge from the financial crisis that struck in 2001. The US is a strong supporter of Turkey at the IMF and continues to work with Turkey to support and promote reform, increased foreign investment and enhanced international trade, including the plan to establish Qualifying Industrialized Zones (QIZs) in Turkey that can help lead to further stabilization and recovery.

With respect to the Belgian visit, the delegation engaged in lively discussions with our briefers on US and European foreign policy, and noted the areas where the two converge, such as the war against terrorism and, where they sometimes diverge, including the International Criminal Court, Kyoto Protocol, Iraq. In general, our delegation heard on almost every occasion that whereas Europe tends to favor multilateral action to deal with challenges, the US, from the European perspective, increasingly appears more unilateralist.

At NATO, on the other hand, the Alliance’s multilateral approach to security is as important as ever. New threats, such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), require new approaches, including the ability to deploy flexible well-armed forces at short notice, and new capabilities, such as the need for Alliance members to increase their defense budgets so that they are more in line with the US’s.

The Council delegates also noted that the EU’s and NATO’s enlargement plans were moving forward, and both institutions appeared to be on track to accept new members by year’s end. Of course, Turkey is one of the nations that aspire to European Union membership, and this subject was one of several discussed during the delegation’s meetings in both Belgium and Turkey. In the pages that follow, we hope to elaborate on this and other issues and offer several recommendations for policy consideration.

**Turkey’s National Political Scene**

The first stop on the Council delegation’s itinerary was Turkey’s capital, Ankara, where the national political campaign season was in full swing. Although elections were not due for another 18 months, Turkey’s Parliament voted on July 31 to move up the date following more than 60 parliamentary and cabinet resignations—including the progressive EU accession advocate Foreign Minister, Ismail Cem, and later the highly respected Finance Minister Kemal Dervis—in the wake of government paralysis brought on by Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit’s illness and hospitalization earlier in the summer.

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1 In order for the EU’s enlargement process to proceed, Ireland, an EU member, still had to ratify the Treaty of Nice, which it had rejected on a previous referendum in 2001. However, on October 20, 2002, the people of Ireland voted to approve the Treaty by a vote of 63 to 37 percent, paving the way for new members to join the EU in December.
The main parties likely to contest the fall election are: Democratic Left Party (DSP), Nationalist Action Party (MHP), Motherland Party (Anap), AK Party (Justice and Development), New Turkey Party, True Path (DYP), Saadet (Happiness), People’s Democracy Party (Hadep), Republican People’s Party (CHP) and the Democratic Turkey Party.

Opinion polls indicate that the AK Party (Justice and Development Party) most likely will win the largest share of the vote on November 3. Formed last year by moderate members of Turkey’s banned pro-Islamic Welfare Party, AK has been labeled “Islamist” by its opponents. Its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has been barred from the election because of his 1998 conviction for “inciting religious hatred”—something he allegedly did by reciting a nationalist poem, which appears in many Turkish school textbooks, as part of a public political speech.

However, AK does not consider itself a religious party. It characterizes its platform as promoting “fundamental” rights—which encompass the right of Muslim women to wear headscarves in schools or other public places—rather than religious rights. It is pro-NATO and endorses EU membership, policies of the Turkish political center. It says that it will cooperate with the International Monetary Fund’s reform program for Turkey.

Still, observers wonder whether the Turkish military—the self-appointed guardian of Ataturk’s legacy of democratization, Westernization and secularism—might intervene, as it has several times in the past, should AK win. The European Union, the institution to which Turkey aspires, is watching developments carefully as the EU considers strong democratic institutions, respect for human rights and civilian control of the military among the prerequisites for membership. Most believe, however, that the military will remain in its garrisons and let the political process proceed.

This question of religion in politics reflects a larger discussion on the proper role of religion in Turkey’s avowedly secular society. Although minarets dot the city skylines and the call to prayer can be heard throughout the country, only 27 percent of Muslim Turks actually pray five times a day. In addition, the religious practice of slaughtering an animal to mark the Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice) is not permitted in public. Unlike their counterparts in other Islamic countries, many Turkish Muslims believe that the actual slaughtering of an animal is not necessary for the rite as long as the funds that would have been spent on the animal and the slaughtering are donated to charity.

However, neither the political campaign nor the November 3 vote was expected to resolve the issue. Most likely, the discussion on religion and politics will continue for some time.

2 According to The Washington Post of November 4, 2002, Turkey’s AK Party won a “decisive victory” in Turkey’s national election, drawing more than one-third of the vote, a “plurality that would allow it to govern without a partner.” On November 5, 2002, The Washington Post reported that Turkish media “played up a post-election pledge by [AK’s] Party Chairman, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to respect Turks’ ‘lifestyles.’ His vow was seen as a promise not to seek to impose Islamic strictures, such as women’s head coverings and the banning of alcohol, on a society with a long secular tradition.”
Iraq

Set against the backdrop of Turkey’s national election campaign—with its underlying debate on the role of religion in a secular state—was the possibility of a war with Iraq. At the time of the delegation’s visit, the US was pursuing a new Resolution in the United Nations (UN) Security Council that would set a specific deadline for Iraq to comply with all outstanding UN resolutions regarding international inspection of its WMD program or face a possible assault. Concurrently, the Bush administration was advocating approval of a US Congressional joint resolution to authorize the use of force—unilaterally if necessary—against Iraq.

Turkey, which shares a border with Iraq, has experience in dealing with many Iraqi regimes, including Saddam Hussein’s. It participated in the Gulf War coalition against Iraq in 1991 and became a partner in Operation Northern Watch, an ongoing operation wherein the Turks allow the US and British to use its Incirlik airbase to patrol the northern no-fly zone over Iraq. In any new conflict with Iraq, the US would need access to the bases in Turkey and Kuwait to prosecute the war.

While Turkey most likely would grant permission to use its bases, it would be extremely wary of a war with Iraq. Turkey fears an independent Kurdish state emerging from the instability and possible disintegration of Iraq into nonviable mini-states as a result of an invasion. Turkey fought its own Kurdish insurgency in the aftermath of the Gulf War and thus is worried about the impact that Kurdish statehood would have on Turkey’s own Kurdish population and the nearly two million Turkomans of northern Iraq—a people with close ethnic and cultural ties to the Turks. Consequently, Turkey most likely would seek assurances that the territorial integrity of Iraq would be maintained.

A second concern relates to the effects on the Turkish economy. Before the Gulf war, Iraq was Turkey’s second largest trading partner. With the advent of the Gulf War, Turkey cooperated fully with the international coalition against Iraq, implementing UN sanctions, including closing its oil pipeline, thereby losing billions of dollars in revenue. According to Mark Parris, former US Ambassador to Turkey, “The impact of these sanctions was on the order of what America would experience if the US-Canadian border were sealed indefinitely.” The Gulf War also adversely affected Turkey’s tourism sector, particularly in the southeast region. Estimates of Turkey’s economic losses range between $40 and $100 billion.

To exacerbate the situation, Turks say that they were promised compensation for their losses from the coalition partners. According to diplomats, these funds have never materialized.

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3 The United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1441 by a vote of 15 to 0 on November 8, 2002.

4 On October 11, 2002, Congress passed the resolution to authorize the President to “use the armed forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate in order to defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq.” According to The Washington Post of October 11, 2002, 77 of 100 Senators and 296 of 435 House members voted for the resolution. President George W. Bush signed it into law on October 16, 2002.
In light of this history, it is understandable that the Turks with whom we met listed “consultations, consultations and consultations” as the top three priorities for the US vis-à-vis Turkey on Iraq. In these discussions, it is expected that Turkey will seek specific commitments from the Bush administration regarding debt forgiveness or additional economic or military assistance for Turkey before hostilities begin.

For its part, US officials point to several consultative visits to Turkey by high-ranking administration officials, including Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman—a former US Ambassador to Turkey—in the last several months. Both men reaffirmed to their Turkish counterparts the strong Turkish-US partnership, one forged when President Truman sent the USS Missouri to show support for Turkey against Soviet demands and on the battlefields of Korea, where Turkish troops fought side by side with Americans.

They also highlight a US-Turkish partnership—reinforced by Turkey’s perseverance as a staunch NATO ally through forty years of Cold War—that continues in the post-Cold War period with US and Turkey working together in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan and cooperating in the war against terrorism. With respect to the latter, Turkey offered troops and shared intelligence on al-Qaeda in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Turkey-US Economic Partnership

Besides the political arena, the US-Turkey relationship also extends to the economic sphere.

According to the American Embassy in Ankara, the US is currently the second largest destination for Turkish exports (after Germany) and its fourth largest supplier. In the year 2001, Turkish exports to the United States equaled over US$ 3.1 billion, a ten percent share of all exports whereas imports during the same period totaled over US$ 3.2 billion, an eight percent share of all imports.5

Although trade volume between the two countries has jumped from US$ 1.6 billion in 1985 to US$ 6.3 billion in 2001, Turkey has yet to reach its potential in its trade with the United States.

In order to address this situation, the US and Turkey are pursuing several initiatives. Following Prime Minister Ecevit’s visit to Washington, DC on January 16, 2002, the two countries formed a new commission called the “Economic Partnership Commission” to further strengthen economic ties. At its first meeting in late February, the Commission set out to establish Qualifying Industrialized Zones (QIZs), essentially industrial parks in Turkey from which high-tech, non-textile goods could be exported duty-free to the United States.

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5 By comparison, US-Israeli two-way trade totaled $20.8 billion in 2000, per the US Department of State.
QIZs are not new. In fact, they were established by the US Congress under the auspices of the US-Israel free trade agreement (FTA) in Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority to support the peace process in the Middle East. Adding QIZs in Turkey to the existing US-Israeli FTA would require amendment of the FTA and subsequent approval by the US Congress.

While most Turks generally support the QIZs, they do have some concerns. First, the FTA requires that any good produced in a Turkish QIZ would need Israeli content to be eligible for duty-free status. This requirement puts an additional burden on Turkey to secure Israeli involvement. Second, while the QIZs might help in the short term, over the longer haul, Turks would like to see greater access to the US market, particularly for their textile exports, which account for over 25 percent of Turkey’s total exports according to the Turkish Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK). Ultimately, the Turkish business community wants a free trade agreement between the US and Turkey, which, it feels, is the key to enhanced trade and prosperity. Unfortunately, many observers feel that the realization of such an agreement in the near-term is unlikely, given the complexity of the potential treaty itself and the political forces, including US textile and Armenian special interests, which presumably would enter the fray.

In addition to the Economic Partnership Commission and the QIZs, Turkey wants to work with the US to boost foreign investment. The United States—whose total investment in Turkey topped US$ 1.2 billion in 2000—is the fourth biggest foreign investor in Turkey after France, Holland and Germany. According to the American Embassy in Ankara, the potential for American investment in infrastructure projects, including dam building, irrigation systems, power plants and roads, is “immense.”

The Turkish energy sector also presents tremendous opportunities for the US and others. The Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources reports that Turkey is providing 65 percent of its energy needs (oil, coal, natural gas and hydro and other renewable resources) through imports from various countries, and this rate is expected to rise to 73 percent in 2010 and further to 78 percent in 2020. These data demonstrate that Turkey is a growing energy market.

The Caspian region, in particular, has attracted considerable attention due to its oil and gas potential. Owing to its strategic location, Turkey forms a natural energy bridge linking suppliers in the East, including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Russia, Central Asia, the Middle East, with consumers in the West.

A key project in this “East-West Energy Corridor” is the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) crude oil pipeline. When completed, the BTC will transport crude oil produced in the Caspian Basin via a 1,760 km pipeline to a marine terminal at Ceyhan on Turkey’s Mediterranean Coast and then onward to world markets by sea-going tankers. The Presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey and officials of the BTC Company, which will construct, own and operate the pipeline, broke ground for the pipeline in Baku on
September 18, 2002. A similar ceremony for the Turkish section of the pipeline took place on September 26, 2002. The BTC pipeline is expected to be operational in early 2005 and is projected to carry approximately one million barrels of crude oil per day.

The BTC pipeline is also significant because it helps to reduce the West’s dependence on Middle Eastern oil and breaks Russia’s monopoly as Europe’s major energy supplier. The project thus promotes diversification of the West’s energy resources.

Turkey’s Economic Crisis, Recovery and Reform

The BTC project is an encouraging sign as Turkey emerges from last year’s economic crisis. According to the US government, after a period of steady economic growth (3.7 percent annually between 1991 and 2000, with a decline in 1999 due to two severe earthquakes), Turkey’s economic situation “deteriorated sharply in February 2001 as a devastating financial crisis forced the country to sharply devalue its currency, the lira. In addition, Turkey’s inflation and unemployment soared, and real gross domestic product (GDP) fell sharply (down 7.3 percent in 2001).”

Triggered in part by underlying structural weaknesses, including current account deficits and a weak banking sector, Turkey’s crisis deepened further in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, which lowered demand for Turkey’s exports and reduced tourism receipts.

In response to Turkey’s economic problems, the IMF announced a series of stand-by credits. According to US government reports, an IMF assistance package begun in December 1999 ultimately disbursed around $15 billion to Turkey. On February 4, 2002, the IMF, with strong US support, approved a further $17 billion assistance package and as of June 28, 2002, Turkey had drawn about $11 billion of this total.

The IMF assistance to Turkey is conditioned on implementation of reforms aimed at addressing the root causes of the country’s economic problems. Several of the reforms that Turkey pledged to undertake include: reforming its banking sector, lowering the inflation rate, reducing the heavy debt burden—145 percent of gross national product (GNP), according to the Turkish Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association (TUSIAD)—and in general creating “a stable macroeconomic environment conducive to economic growth.”

Even before its recent economic crisis, Turkey faced many economic challenges. TUSIAD members with whom the delegation met in Istanbul named a few: heavy taxation and low rates of tax collection, low levels of private investment (Turkey’s only stock

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6 According to the Turkish Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, the BTC Co. shareholders are: BP (38.21 percent), State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic [SOCAR] (25.00 percent), Statoil (9.58 percent), Unocal (8.90 percent), Turkish Petroleum Corporation [TPAO] (7.55 percent), Eni (five percent), Itochu (3.40 percent) and Delta Hess (2.36 percent). TotalFinaElf and Inpex have acquired the right to purchase a five percent and 2.5 percent interest in BTC Co. respectively. These transactions will be finalized soon.
exchange located in Istanbul is ranked fifth in emerging markets behind South Korea, China/Taiwan, India and South Africa), overly complicated legal and administrative procedures, lack of foreign investment; and a failure to generate sufficient jobs for the country’s rapidly growing population.

Turkey’s government has been working to implement reforms to address these shortcomings, and the US, for its part, strongly encourages the effort. Besides endorsing IMF assistance for Turkey, the US also made grants exceeding $200 million to Turkey this year, according to the Turkish State Ministry of the Economy. Further, during the delegation’s briefing at the Ministry, Robert Deutsch, Deputy Chief of Mission at the American Embassy - Ankara, who accompanied our delegation, presented a letter signed by Ambassador Pearson to Minister of the Economy Masum Turker—who planned to depart for the IMF/World Bank meetings in Washington, DC immediately following the Council’s appointment—that reiterated the US government’s support for Turkey’s economic reforms and noted that a macroeconomic policy of fiscal restraint in the period of uncertainty in the run up to Turkey’s November elections will be important.

**Turkey’s Aspirations to Join the European Union**

The process of economic reform is closely linked to the question of Turkey’s desire to join the European Union.

The EU requires applicant countries to meet certain economic and political conditions—known as the “Copenhagen criteria”—prior to receiving an invitation to membership. One of the economic indicators is low inflation. As discussed above, Turkey, which became an EU candidate country in 1999, is implementing reforms aimed at bringing its inflation rate down.

Further, since Turkey entered into a customs union with the EU in 1996, it thus has been working to harmonize its laws and regulations with EU standards. Turkey is the only one of the candidate countries to have achieved this customs union arrangement with the EU.

With respect to the political conditions, which are related to democracy/democratic institutions, respect for human rights, particularly minorities, etc., Turkey’s Parliament voted on August 4, 2002, to abolish capital punishment (except in times of war) and to allow teaching and broadcasting in Kurdish, the language of Turkey’s minority. Further, recognizing that based on population it would be the second largest country in the EU (after Germany), Turkey has said it would negotiate a separate accord with the EU on immigration to allow for a gradual transition to open borders. In fact, one of the delegation’s Turkish briefers noted that instead of sending its laborers to EU countries, Turkey would prefer to have the West’s factories in Turkey.

While the EU applauds Turkey’s reforms, it apparently feels Turkey still has a ways to go before it is ready to join the EU. Specifically, it says that Turkey must continue
its efforts to further strengthen civilian control of the military, address its high inflation and improve its human rights record.

Consequently, Turkey was not expected to be included in the latest round of EU expansion, the details of which will be finalized at the EU’s Copenhagen conference from December 12-13. Of the 13 candidate countries, it appeared that only ten (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia) would receive invitations in December for admission by 2004. Romania and Bulgaria, also negotiating EU entry, would probably not be ready to join until 2007.

Needless to say, Turkey is disappointed with the EU’s stance on its application not only because EU membership is a major foreign policy priority for Turkey but also because membership in the European body would provide an enormous psychological boost by cementing Turkey’s footing in the West. The US strongly supports Turkey’s application and continues to urge the EU to take action on it. Unfortunately, the EU has yet to announce a date for accession negotiations to begin with Turkey, and it was not clear if such a signal would be forthcoming at the Copenhagen conference.

As a result, international observers wonder whether the underlying reason for the delay on Turkey’s application is Europe’s bias against admitting a non-Christian country to the “club” and fear of extending its borders to Syria and Iraq. The European officials with whom the delegation met in Brussels dismiss this allegation. They say that Turkey will eventually gain entry to the EU, but, at the moment, public opinion in EU member countries is not ripe. More time is needed for Europeans to become familiar with the idea of Turkey in the EU. To put their view into perspective, several Europeans posed this rhetorical question to our delegation: “How would America like it if Mexico were to become the 51st state tomorrow?”

An issue that complicates Turkey’s application to the EU is Cyprus, the East Mediterranean island at the center of a decades-old dispute between Greece and Turkey. The Economist of January 16, 2002, provides the historical background:

“The trouble between the [Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots of Cyprus] started almost from the day that Britain the colonial power, left the island (except for two military base areas) in 1960. The pressure, pumped up by some anti-British terrorist violence, had come from Greek-Cypriots. The trouble was that they did not simply want independence from British rule. Led by their archbishop Makarios, they wanted to unite with Greece.

The Turkish-speaking, Muslim minority, outnumbered about four-to-one by the Greek-speaking Christian majority, bitterly opposed this. Turkey added its much more powerful voice. An attempt at a constitutional settlement, and then later a Greek-Cypriot coup intended to unite the island with Greece, both failed. At the time of the 1974 coup, the Turkish army invaded and occupied the northern half of the island. From that day to this Cyprus has remained divided, physically as well as emotionally.”
Turkey does not recognize as legitimate the Greek Cypriot Government of Cyprus, which submitted the EU membership application on behalf of the whole island. Further, Prime Minister Ecevit warned last year that his country might annex the Turkish part of the island if the EU were to “admit Cyprus in a way that, de facto, left its part outside,” stated The Economist in January 2002.

On-again-off-again talks between Greeks and Turks on a resolution to the Cyprus question thus far have not been successful. However, renewed impetus to conclude an agreement has been generated this fall because Greece has threatened to veto the entire EU enlargement process if Cyprus is not admitted to the EU in this round. As a result, it seems that Cyprus will be admitted with or without a final solution to the overall Cyprus problem.

The European Union: Looking Toward the Future

Greece’s veto threat raises a larger issue with which the EU must deal in the face of expansion. At present, all EU members have veto power, and policy matters require unanimous agreement by member states. As the EU expands (from 15 to 25 countries by 2004), it becomes all the more difficult to achieve unanimity on key issues, and the threat of veto from any member looms—dramatically increasing the likelihood of gridlock.

Compounding gridlock is the probability of more paperwork and bureaucracy following the accession of new members. For example, the EU currently has 11 working languages. December’s enlargement will increase that number to 20. Further, a piece of legislation currently takes on average three to four years to make its way through the European Commission and the European Parliament. With new members, this timeframe might be extended. Finally, the Maastricht Treaty requires that the European Parliament convene 12 times per year in Strasbourg, France. As a result, for one week every month, the 550 current Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and their staffs, plus journalists and lobbyists decamp to Strasbourg. These Strasbourg sojourns and related costs now account for 16 percent of the EU’s expenses, a number that conceivably could go higher as the EU expands.

However, the above concerns do not discount the EU’s overall success. Indeed, the integration process launched by the Treaty of Rome in 1957 has produced almost five decades of peace on a European continent that has known too much war. Moreover, the introduction of the “euro,” the common currency in the 12-country euro-zone, proceeded smoothly, and this summer the euro-dollar exchange rate achieved parity for the first time since the euro coin’s introduction.

However, as they look to the future, Europeans realize that they must do more to further strengthen their integration. Consequently, they now are drafting a constitution, under the auspices of the “Convention on the Future of Europe,” headed by former French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing. The Convention’s aim is to develop new governing mechanisms to meet the challenges of an enlarged union.
A broader goal of the constitutional convention is to create a strong and united EU that can assert itself on the world stage. At present, despite the existence of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy and a designated spokesperson for the CFSP, i.e. the High Representative, a cacophony of European voices—emanating from London, Berlin, Paris, Athens, Rome, etc.—is often heard on a given issue. This phenomenon once prompted former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to ask, “Who speaks for Europe?”

The recent case of Iraq is illustrative. Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that the UK would cooperate with the US on Iraq whereas Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who recently sought reelection, campaigned on the promise that German troops would not participate in a military strike against Iraq nor would German bases be made available for the military effort—irrespective of whether the action was backed by a UN vote. While the EU did announce a policy position supporting unfettered access to Iraq’s weapons sites by international inspectors, its member states’ individual postures on the Iraq matter seemed to resonate more clearly on the international scene.

Binding Europe closer together and strengthening its ability to speak with one voice can help to create a counterweight to the political, cultural, financial and military dominance of the United States. European politicians have criticized the US for taking unilateral positions on global warming (Kyoto Protocol), the International Criminal Court and other key issues. Also, they are increasingly concerned about the US tendency—in their view—to favor the “stick,” a heavy-handed approach to problem solving, such as a preemptive strike on Iraq, to Europe’s preferred “carrot” of diplomacy and dialogue, often effectuated through multilateral fora. A stronger and more integrated EU—a “superpower of Europe”—might have greater success in pressing its case for policy options other than those put forward by the US.

The EU also seeks an enhanced role in the security and defense area. It has proposed to create by 2003 a rapid reaction force of up to 60,000 troops that could undertake humanitarian and rescue missions and peacekeeping exercises. This force also could respond to international crises in situations where NATO as a whole is not engaged militarily.

Recognizing that NATO does have some concerns about the EU rapid reaction force—including possible duplication of planning mechanisms and investments in materiel—and that NATO is looking at developing its own rapid reaction force, the EU is committed to dialogue with NATO members, particularly the US, on this proposal.

Indeed, the stakes are too high to risk significant erosion in US-EU relations. After all, the US and the EU have cooperated in many areas, including the Middle East peace process and the war against terrorism. In the economic arena, the annual US-EU relationship is valued at $1.4 trillion, according to the US Mission to the EU. While there have been several tiffs related to genetically modified organisms (GMOs), steel and bananas, overall both the US and Europe have benefited.
NATO

This US-Europe partnership is further solidified through NATO. Formed in 1949 as a Euro-Atlantic collective security organization to counter the Soviet menace, NATO not only won the Cold War but continues to be a vital alliance that is adapting to meet new threats, such as terrorism. For example, immediately following the tragic events in the US on September 11, 2001, NATO invoked Article V, and NATO planes later patrolled American skies—for the first time ever—to free up US materiel for the war in Afghanistan. Further, 17 of the 18 NATO Allies (Iceland has no military) participated in the Afghanistan effort, silencing the debate of several years ago over whether NATO would undertake missions that are “out of area.”

Like the EU, NATO is preparing to admit new members this fall. At its summit in Prague from November 21-22, the Alliance will review the applications of nine aspirant countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. It most likely will accept seven—deferring membership for Albania and Macedonia to a future round. Thus, far from disappearing into oblivion, NATO is expanding to embrace others that share its vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace.

In addition to new members, the Prague summit will consider the Alliance’s need for “new capabilities,” such as strategic lift, precision-guided munitions and secure communications, to strengthen its ability to “carry out the full range of its missions and field forces that can move quickly to wherever they are needed.”

Consequently, at Prague, NATO will seek to redress this situation by sharpening the focus of the Defense Capabilities Initiative, the high-level program launched in 1999 to boost Alliance capabilities. It also will encourage its European members to increase their defense spending to bring it more in line with the US’s. These data underscore the point: President Bush’s fiscal year 2003 budget increased US defense spending by 14 percent (or approximately ten percent after adjusting for inflation). The amount of the increase alone is more than 12 NATO members’ defense budgets combined, per the US Department of Defense.

The gap occurs because in recent years Europe’s political leaders have taken the decision to put more funds into social welfare projects rather than defense. While some European countries may be in a position to shift resources to increase defense spending significantly, others are not. Consequently, one possible solution that has been proposed is for the European members of NATO to pool assets and specialize. For example, given that it has excellent chemical decontamination units, the Czech Republic might specialize in this asset. Norway might provide special forces because it announced it will become the world’s leader in this area.

The third major agenda item for the Prague summit, “new relationships,” encompasses NATO’s actions to reach out and expand integration with all NATO Partners.
NATO and Russia took important steps in furthering their cooperation earlier this year when NATO opened an Information Office in Moscow and when it and Russia formed the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) on May 28, 2002. According to the White House, the NRC will provide “opportunities for consultation, joint decision and joint action on a wide range of issues…and it will focus on specific, well-defined projects where NATO and Russia share a common goal…. [However, it] does not provide Russia a veto over NATO decisions or actions.” The initial NRC work plan includes undertakings in these areas: nonproliferation, theater missile defense and military-to-military cooperation.

Mindful of this new linkage between Russia and NATO, NATO’s focus at the Prague summit will be on enhancing cooperation with NATO partner countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia, with the Mediterranean Dialogue Partners, i.e. Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, and Ukraine in the common effort to promote security and stability.

Thus, taken together the three priorities of the Prague summit—new capabilities, new members and new relationships—will be “the hallmark of NATO in the 21st century.”

As a result of its meetings at NATO headquarters, the Council delegation came away convinced more than ever that fifty-three years after its creation, NATO is still relevant. We were impressed with the way in which the Alliance is working to adapt itself to meet new threats. Finally, we were reaffirmed in our belief that NATO remains the key Euro-Atlantic institution in promoting peace and stability.

Indeed, Under Secretary of State Marc Grossman calls NATO the “core of the US commitment to Europe and the bedrock of our security.” NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson says the Alliance is a “key element of the world’s multilateral architecture [that] provides a forum where all of its members can discuss, and where appropriate, act upon the security issues on their agenda.”

Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, the Council delegation felt that the mission to Turkey and Belgium was extremely worthwhile and timely. In fact, members remarked that the opportunity to see first-hand the changes and initiatives underway in Turkey and at the EU and NATO was extremely useful. They appreciated the first-rate briefings and outstanding support provided by the American Embassies in Ankara and Brussels, the Consulate in Istanbul and the Missions to the EU and NATO and felt that the visit provided them with a clearer sense of the current situation, the key issues and the future direction.

Thus, in light of our investigations, the Council delegation wishes to offer several recommendations:

1. Urge the European Union to take action on Turkey’s membership application and at minimum announce at its Copenhagen conference in December (or before) a date for accession negotiations to begin.
2. Foster continued good relations between the US and Turkey. Further support Turkey’s reform efforts, through the International Monetary Fund, and consider reducing and possibly eliminating Turkey’s outstanding debt—a major impediment to future economic stability—stemming from the Gulf War.

3. Promote an enhanced US-Turkey economic relationship, including timely passage of the amendment to the US-Israeli free trade agreement to allow for the creation of Qualifying Industrialized Zones (QIZs) in Turkey. Study the potential for a separate bilateral Turkey-US free trade agreement.

4. Advance US consultation and dialogue on key policy issues, particularly Iraq, with allies around the world on a bilateral and multilateral basis, as appropriate.

5. Call upon the European members of NATO to review their defense budgets with an eye towards upgrading their contributions where possible in order to enhance NATO’s capability to meet the challenges posed by the changing security environment.
Annex

Council of American Ambassadors Mission Delegation*

Hon. Keith L. Brown and Carol Brown
President, Council of American Ambassadors
Ambassador to Denmark, 1989-1992
Ambassador to Lesotho, 1982-1983

Hon. Bruce S. Gelb and Lueza Gelb
Ambassador to Belgium, 1991-1993

Hon. Glen A. Holden and Gloria A. Holden
Ambassador to Jamaica, 1989-1993

Hon. John L. Loeb, Jr. and Sharon Handler
Ambassador to Denmark, 1981-1983

Hon. James C. and Sheilah Rosapepe
Ambassador to Romania, 1998-2001

Hon. Robert D. Stuart, Jr. and Lillian Stuart
Ambassador to Norway, 1984-1989

Hon. Timothy L. Towell
Ambassador to Paraguay, 1988-1991

Hon. Leon J. Weil and Mabel Weil
Ambassador to Nepal, 1984-1987

Mrs. Magalen (Maggie) O. Bryant
Former Chairman, The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Miss Carolyn M. Gretzinger
Executive Director, Council of American Ambassadors

* Ms. Handler and Ambassador and Mrs. Weil did not participate in the Belgium leg of the mission. Mrs. Rosapepe did not participate in the Turkey leg of the mission. Ambassador Rosapepe was not able to participate in the Ankara briefings.