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REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
MINISTRY FOR EU AFFAIRS

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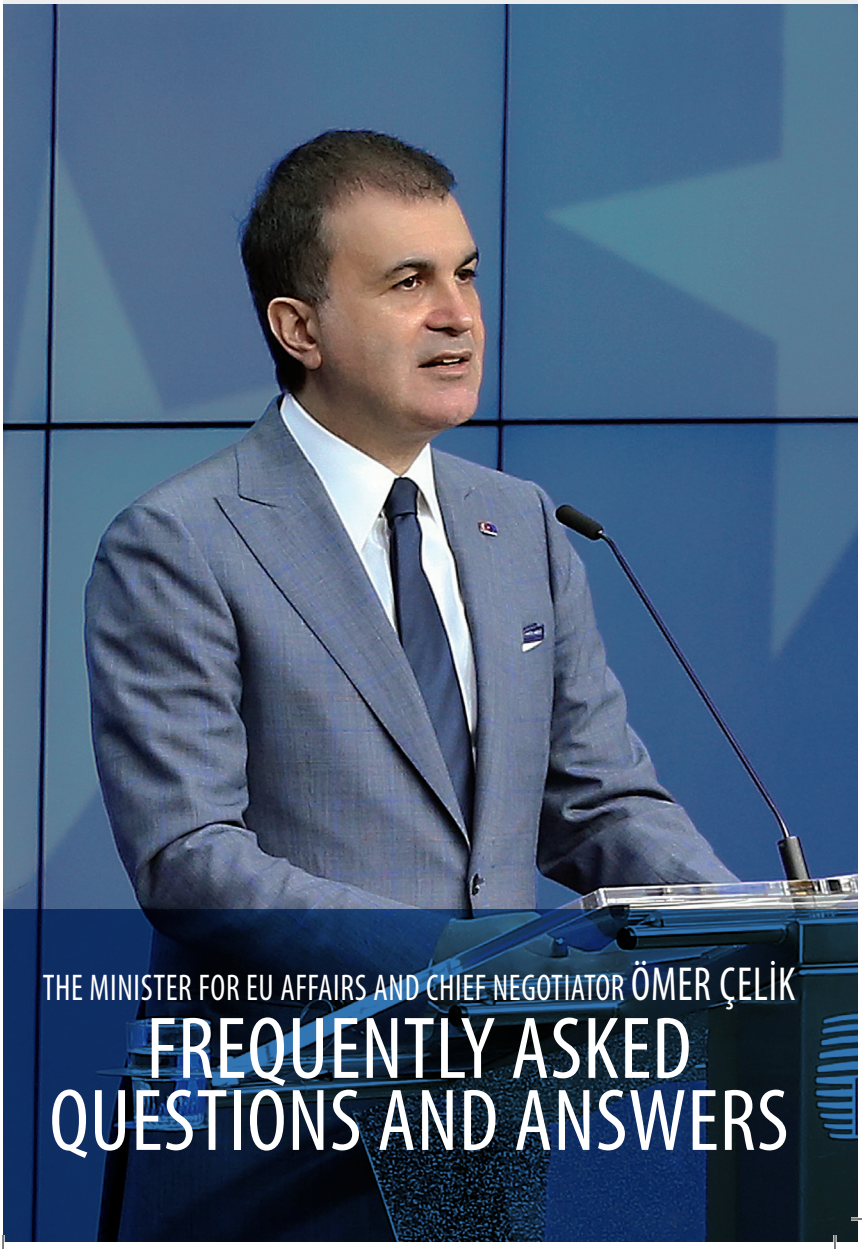
MINISTRY FOR EUROPEAN UNION AFFAIRS



THE MINISTER FOR EU AFFAIRS AND CHIEF NEGOTIATOR ÖMER ÇELİK

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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QUESTION
ANSWER

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CONTENTS

Does Turkey maintain its aim to become a full member of the EU?.....7

Would it be possible to discuss "new models" for Turkey-EU relations apart from full membership? 8

How would you define Turkey in Europe? 9

How do you define the relationship between Turkey and the EU? 10

Has there been any weakening in Turkey's will for the reforms?.....12

Do you still consider the European Union as a "union of values"? 14

Does Turkey need the EU or does the EU need Turkey?.....16

What attracts the EU most to Turkey?.....18

Do you think that the EU applies double standards against Turkey? 20

Do you think that opposition to Turkey is becoming widespread in EU Member States? 22

What is your opinion of the criticisms levelled at Turkey especially in the recent period regarding freedoms? 23

What is your opinion about the arrests of a number of journalists and members of parliament within the scope of the Anti-Terrorism Law? 26

Have Turkey's extradition requests from the EU Member States for terrorism offences been concluded?.....28

How should the debates on reintroduction of death penalty in Turkey be assessed? 30

What is Turkey's approach in the matter of refugees?.....31

What is your opinion on Turkey-EU cooperation on the migrant crisis? 34

What are the influences of the migrant crisis on the architecture of European values? 36

The EU considers the amendment of the Turkish Anti-Terrorism Law as a prerequisite for visa liberalisation. What is your opinion on this issue? 38

CONTENTS

Is the EU sufficiently fulfilling its responsibilities to Turkey regarding the migrant crisis? 40

You host more than 3 million Syrian refugees. Does that have any negative effect on Turkish domestic politics or the social structure of the country? 43

How do you evaluate EU's inability to develop common policies in many fields? 44

It is known today that the EU is struggling with crises. What do you think is the main problem in the EU? 46

Have the relations between Turkey and Russia developed so as to be an alternative to Turkey-EU relations? 49

What will Turkey's place be in the post-Brexit picture of Europe? 50

What are your views on minority rights? 52

What do you think about the European Parliament's call for "freezing the negotiations" with Turkey? 54

You said that the European Union consistently develops discourse over a negative agenda in its relations with Turkey. Could you please elaborate on this? 56

What is your opinion on the crisis in Turkey-EU relations in the recent period? 60

You indicated that you considered the EU as being insincere in its relations with Turkey. Would you please expand on this? 62

What is your opinion about the EU's approach of "not opening new chapters"? 64

If you had to make a choice, which one would you prefer: Democracy or the rule of law? 65

Do you think the size of the Turkish population is in any way a determinant in Turkey-EU relations? 66

Does Turkey expect concessions, given the fact that it is a very large country? 67

What is your opinion on the EU enlargement policy? 68

Is it true that Turkey-EU relations have been reduced to the migration issue recently?.....69

Can it be said that Turkey protects the freedom-security balance in its fight against terrorism?.....70

What kind of a relationship is there between Turkey's security and Europe's security? 72

What is your opinion about the use of the words Islam and terrorism together? 74

What is your opinion about the extreme right movements which are on the rise in Europe?.....76

What would you like to say about the fight against extremist movements? 78

What kind of relation do you think there is between hostility towards Turkey, Islamophobia, Europhobia, xenophobia and anti-Semitism?.....80

You refer to a matryoshka doll in terms of far right movements. Could you please explain?.....82

Do you think that that the level of cooperation between Turkey and the EU on the fight against terrorism is adequate?.....84

You have referred to a double standard concerning the fight against terrorism. What did you wish to say?.....85

How do you define Fethullah Gülen's terrorist organization (FETO)? 89

Did the solidarity expected between Turkey and the EU emerge after the coup attempt?.....90

How should Turkey-EU relations evolve considering regional and global instabilities?.....92

Why is it important to keep the channels of communication between Turkey and the EU open? 94

How do you see the future of Turkey-EU relations?.....97

Does Turkey maintain its aim to become a full member of the EU?

Regarding its relations with the EU, Turkey maintains its bid for full EU membership. However, the question here is with which European Union we maintain our bid for full EU membership. We maintain our bid for full membership with a European Union that unites and functions on the basis of democracy, human rights and rule of law, without double standards.

If Europe is to be as imagined by certain extreme right and racist movements, such as Pegida, Golden Dawn or the Five Star Movement, Turkey would not be a member, even if invited. For instance, we would not want to be a member of a European Union as envisaged by Nicolas Sarkozy. We certainly do not want the Europe of Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders or the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Europe we want is the one based on genuine democratic values. Turkey's bid for full EU membership continues for an EU which is based on and is committed to democratic values.

Would it be possible to discuss "new models" for Turkey-EU relations apart from full membership?

It is not possible for us to be proposed with or accept anything other than full membership. An approach which stipulates *"Let us put aside negotiations with Turkey and concentrate on developments in other areas"* will not be accepted by Turkey. Turkey-EU relations are too comprehensive to be reduced to cooperation only in the areas of the Customs Union, the fight against terrorism and the migrant crisis and accession negotiations for full EU membership form the basis of our relations.

We do not accept models such as *"Privileged Partnership"* in place of full EU membership. We will never accept any second-class approach, which excludes us from being in the main institutions of the European Union.

How would you define Turkey in Europe?

Turkey is a European state and a European power. This has been so throughout history and will continue to be so. This is a reality that cannot be changed even if we are not a member of the European Union. Even though Turkey is not a member of the EU, it is a European state and a European democracy.

The European Union is our common future. The security and welfare of Europe and the future of European democracies are our common future. Democracy, rule of law and human rights are common values we share with the European Union. As a country of the Balkans, Asia, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, as well as being a Muslim country, Turkey has also been a European country and a European democracy throughout its history. Thus, Turkey's process of becoming a member of the European Union is shaped on the basis of such values.

How do you define the relationship between Turkey and the EU?

Turkey-EU relations should not be based on competition. The steps and reforms undertaken by Turkey towards EU membership should be appreciated and promoted further. This transformation in Turkey is characterised by a growing economy and developing democracy, and should be taken into consideration as well.

The EU should consider Turkey as a part of its *"enlargement policy"* rather than its *"neighbourhood policy"*.

The European Union and Turkey should not be placed in different contexts and seen as actors that are in competition at the table. When we observe the situation with a real vision, there is no competitive relationship between Turkey and the European Union. Some Member States of the EU are in competition with Turkey, which is misguided and a historical mistake. As envisaged within the scope of the March 18 Turkey-EU Statement, collaboration based on a common vision is essential.

Even though Turkey is not an EU member, Turkey is a large European state and has been throughout its history. We are a major European democracy and a major European power. Turkey makes comments or takes action as a Mediterranean, a Middle Eastern and an Asian country, but more importantly, as a European country. We do not call to Europe, we call as Europeans. We do not offer solutions for Europe; we find solutions as Europeans. When we speak, we do not speak to Europe; we speak as Europeans.

This period harbours major challenges for Turkey, European geopolitics and European democracies. It is therefore wrong to exclude Turkey from European geopolitics.

Considering this, as an important European power and a large democratic state, Turkey's accession to the EU is essential both for Turkey's national interests and the European vision so that Europe can create new mechanisms and new alliances against these major crises.

Has there been any weakening in Turkey's will for the reforms?

There is no shortcoming in Turkey's will for the reforms. We carry out reforms for the welfare of our citizens so that they can benefit from high democratic standards.

Turkey-EU relations should be considered within a broader framework. Turkey's sensitivity to protect the balance between freedom and security through the reforms undertaken so far and to be carried out in the future, even under this massive terrorist attack, is significant.

The method by which these reforms are carried out is important, but just as important is to strengthen the common mechanisms for the future of Europe, the future of the EU, the future of European democracy and the future of European values with regard to peace.


CNN
HABER

Do you still consider the European Union as a "union of values"?

I believe that European values do not belong to the European continent alone. These values are universal since they are the results of mankind's major experiences. Starting from Europe, the more the feeling of unity based on these universal values expands, the more this will benefit our region and the world. In other words, this unity will develop and strengthen when Turkey, a European democratic country, becomes a part of it.

Both as a country with ties to the Balkans, Caucasus, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Middle East, and as a European power and democracy, Turkey has always played a crucial role in protecting these values. We are defending the values of the European Union, not because they are represented by the EU, but because they have become universal.

Turkey is a large European power and a strong European democracy. We should therefore collaborate much more to protect and strengthen these universal political values represented in the EU, but which belong to all humanity, not just to the European continent alone.

Everyone, whether resident in Europe or not, should take responsibility for protecting European values. Whether we become an EU Member State or not, we hope that the EU continues to be committed to fundamental political values.

In fact, the values Europe is based on are essential values. However, these values have not been efficiently reflected in politics recently and have not resulted in the establishment of various mechanisms. This has harmed core European values. In this respect, many European politicians have failed, which has left a black mark on its history.

We have to take a stance against a possible collapse of the European Union because of a lack of foresight by some European politicians. These values should also be well-preserved to ensure that peace is promoted in the Balkans; that the extreme right does not gain a foothold in Europe; and that Muslims and Jews, who have both long been targeted groups, are protected in Europe.

Does Turkey need the EU or does the EU need Turkey?

As demonstrated by the migrant crisis, Turkey and the EU need each other. In the current period, Turkey and the EU need to intensify their relations given the migrant crisis and fight against terrorism.

Turkey will continue to improve human rights, democracy and the rule of law as a strong European democratic state. Forging strong relations and building bridges between Turkey and the EU are beneficial to the region and humanity as a whole. We will continue to work to this end.

What attracts the EU most to Turkey?

Turkey has a unique position in the world as a Muslim and European democratic state, considering the deep ethnic and religious conflicts, and conflicting interests in the region.

Therefore, Turkey's geopolitical position, its military, economic power, foreign policy capacity and democratic structure in a region where Muslims and non-Muslims live in peace are among its most significant soft powers. With an objective view, this power is a golden opportunity for the EU to make its own social peace, prove its commitment to *"Europe of values"* and enhance its effectiveness in its region.

The European Union has been established several times. First, it was established by the mutual agreement of France and Germany. Then, it was established with its expansion to the Eastern Europe through the mutual agreement of Germany and Poland. Its next establishment may be completed by uniting with Anatolia, with the accession of Turkey in order to protect pluralism and develop a common approach and foreign policy against the extreme right and terrorist organizations such as Da'esh.

The Roman Empire transformed from a European state into a world state only by uniting with Anatolia. The European Union has no impact upon Syria and other humanitarian crises. In order for the European Union to become a global power and introduce the right and legitimate policies, it has to unite with Turkey.

Throughout its history, Turkey has been a European power and a strong European state. The future and security of Europe concern all of us. In this respect, we are not guests but hosts when it comes to the security and future of Europe. This is something that concerns Turkey. Turkey's experience will make a contribution. You can see that the cooperation between Turkey and the EU has created an important synergy for resolving security issues and fostering economic advancement.

As in the latest migrant crisis, it has been clearly seen that Turkey is the key actor and the main element in resolving the major crises encountered by Europe. In fact, this has also been observed in the fight against terrorism. While the coalition consisting of 65 countries has been unable to achieve any considerable success against Da'esh, the Turkish army entered Jarablus one month after the coup attempt and Da'esh was cleared from the borders of NATO.

We are entering an entirely new era in which we will witness the change of many mechanisms around the world. There are entirely new global challenges, crises and serious risks. In this

respect, Turkey is the right actor against all these risks and crises, and important in managing those issues.

Do you think that the EU applies double standards against Turkey?

The EU prioritizes Turkey when it is necessary to fight for common values, but when it is time to share these values in the same institutions, the EU refuses Turkey. This is not acceptable. The roadmap of the EU should move forward on the basis of objective criteria. No concessions should be made, but neither should there be an increase in demands.

It is not acceptable that while, on the one hand, Turkey is invited to the

table continuously over issues such as migration and the fight against terrorism, creating responsibilities for Turkey; on the other hand, it is excluded from the table over the issue of sharing the common

institutions, mechanisms and powers of the European Union. Turkey is an important European power, a strategic power and an important state.

It is a clear double standard that while, on the one hand, cooperation with Turkey is underlined when it comes to the migration crisis or fight against terrorism, but on the other hand statements such as *"Turkey cannot be a member of the EU for twenty years, it cannot be a member of the Union in the near future even if it fulfills the objective criteria"* are made with respect to the accession negotiations. Turkey should be considered as a partner in the stability and sharing of mechanisms of the European Union in the same way as it is deemed a partner in struggling with the challenges.

Do you think that opposition to Turkey is becoming widespread in EU Member States?

It is evident that Turkey has a high level of democracy and commitment to democracy. Any democratic country may criticize another democratic country; however, such criticisms should not turn into antagonism. Recently, we have unfortunately seen that many politicians in Europe tend to oppose Turkey. This situation is not conducive to Turkey-EU relations or Europe's future.

Turkey-EU relations bear such historical depth and sound common future perspectives that they cannot be wasted because of the approaches of certain politicians lacking vision. As I have always said, let us concentrate on our common agenda.

What is your opinion of the criticisms levelled at Turkey especially in the recent period regarding freedoms?

Freedom of the press and freedom of expression are the areas over which Turkey is criticized the most. Let us open Chapters 23 and 24 to the negotiations. Does the EU want to use these to criticize Turkey, or is there a genuine intention to advance in these areas? We have confidence in this matter. Let us discuss these realistically and with confidence.

Chapters 23 and 24 include matters such as freedom of the press, freedom of expression, fundamental rights, independence of the judiciary, and the balance between security and justice, security and democracy, and security and freedom. As the Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator of Turkey, I am telling you that when we open these chapters to negotiations, you will see how fast we fulfill the relevant benchmarks.

The relations between Turkey and the EU cannot be improved only by the unilateral performance of Turkey. As a negotiating country, we are, in fact, assertive in this matter. We are at a stage where all chapters in the negotiations could be opened and closed, and we would be able to fulfill all the benchmarks.

Turkey-EU relations are strategic. The relations between Turkey and the EU should progress with a positive agenda, and sound bridges should be built. But in fact, it is not politically sound to constantly criticize and oppose Turkey and to question its commitment to values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law shared with the EU, while there has been no progress in the accession negotiations.

When you talk about freedom of expression or freedom of the press, there is no place in the world that is perfect in these areas. They are talking as if we feel uncomfortable about these issues, but in fact we do not. As a matter of fact, our political cadre has exerted a significant effort in promoting freedom of expression and freedom of the press. We do not envision a future for Turkey which does not entail these freedoms.

As I indicated, our basis is the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), and the European Convention on Human Rights. It is stated in the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights that any discourse that openly praises, incites and provokes terrorism and violence cannot be considered within the context of freedom of expression.

Freedom of expression, freedom of the press; these and others are not the issues we fear or worry about. There you are, then. We say explicitly, then why don't you open Chapters 23 and 24? If you open Chapters 23 and 24, we will sit at the table and negotiate these chapters. However, taking an approach which criticises Turkey or pressures Turkey by using these chapters and accession negotiations as an excuse and as leverage, does not qualify as negotiation by its very nature; it would be something else.

What is your opinion about the arrests of a number of journalists and members of parliament within the scope of the Anti-Terrorism Law?

It is true that there are some journalists against whom legal action was taken within the context of fight against terrorism. However, this should not be viewed under the general heading *"arrested journalists"*" and each file should be analysed separately. An example in this regard, can be given from a newspaper which was closed down within the context of the fight against terrorism. In a column in that newspaper, it was written:

"It is not enough any longer for the PKK to attack soldiers in the southeast of Turkey. PKK must also attack the civilians and shopping centres in the Western cities of Turkey."

Again in another headline, there was reference to the intention of the PKK to assassinate ministers and politicians of the Turkish state in the forthcoming period. These comments are unacceptable and cannot be considered within the framework of freedom of the press.

Furthermore, as can be found in the press archives, a Member of Parliament (MP) made the statement *"We depend on the PKK. The PKK has the strength to defeat the Turkish state with little effort."* One MP is praising the terrorist organization while another one gets caught transporting ammunition to the terrorists.

In this context, the decision of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Henri Batasuna v. Spain serves as a prominent model for us as well. The ECtHR found no infringement in this case and upheld the Spanish Supreme Court's decision on the banning of Batasuna party on the ground that the party's members failed to condemn the attacks by the ETA terrorist organization and participated in a demonstration that praised ETA.

In summary, immunity for any MP or the freedom of press is out of question with reference to praising and supporting a terrorist organization. It is not right to view these under a general headline as imprisoned journalists or imprisoned MPs. Turkey is promoting the rule of law, freedom of expression and freedom of press. However, it should also not be forgotten that we protect democracy under difficult conditions.

Have Turkey's extradition requests from the EU Member States for terrorism offences been concluded?

Many of the extradition requests made by Turkey for the members of terrorist organizations including, first and foremost, the PKK, FETO and DHKP-C are usually not approved by the EU Member States.

Several issues such as *'right to a fair trial'* are brought forward with the aim of delaying the extradition of persons wanted for terrorism offences. Yet Turkey is not a closed, but rather an open society, always accessible by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) and any other international organizations, which rest upon the rule of law.

A fair trial and due process are significant in preventing coup attempts against our democracy. The fight against coup attempts would fail without a due legal process. Turkey recognizes that the democracy can only be protected by assurance of due process and quality of the judicial processes. Heads of the judiciary in Turkey are competent in these matters and follow the processes in the best manner.

Therefore, allegations that the persons whose extraditions are requested would not get a fair trial are unacceptable for Turkey. Those persons would get a fair trial and be held accountable before the law.

How should the debates on reintroduction of death penalty in Turkey be assessed?

An important thing to note here is the conditions under which the death penalty debate has come to the fore. After being subject to a very serious coup attempt, the Turkish public did not receive the support that they hoped for from the world and started a debate over the death penalty as a means of self-protection. However, the atmosphere in Turkey would have been very different if a similar solidarity like the case of the terrorist attack to Charlie Hebdo in France had been displayed towards Turkey.

On the other hand, although the Hungarian Prime Minister himself placed the issue of the death penalty on the agenda, the expulsion of Hungary from the EU has never come into question.

Currently no decision has been taken by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) in this matter. Reintroduction of death penalty is being discussed in Turkey just as in Hungary. It will be assessed as necessary in terms of Turkey's national interests, future perspective and position in the world as well as the future of the Turkish public.

What is Turkey's approach in the matter of refugees?

Turkey has taken a number of successful steps so far, hosting three million refugees and fulfilling its requirements under the March 18 Turkey-EU Statement. Before the March 18 Turkey-EU Statement, 7 thousand people were crossing the Aegean Sea towards the Greek islands in one day, with some losing their lives. This number has now fallen to around 10 to 20.

While Turkey is hosting three million refugees, 800 thousand of whom are children, the government and NGOs have spent around 25 billion dollars so far. However, during this process, the financial assistance of 3 billion euros that the EU is committed to provide Turkey has not arrived quickly.

Therefore, it does not seem possible to say that the EU has been successful in this matter. For instance regarding relocation, EU Member States have relocated a very limited number of people so far compared to their commitments. Some of the EU Member States have engaged in serious bargaining over two to three hundred persons or wanted to bring the issue to a referendum, whereas Turkey is hosting one hundred thousand people in one day.[1]

1. Civil Society Dialogue Meeting of the Turkish and German Media Representatives on December 15, 2016

On the other hand, 800 thousand of the refugees hosted in Turkey are children, 500 thousand of whom are provided with education. This figure is significant particularly considering the fact that the total number of students in Finland who receive an education is about 400 thousand.

Yet, there are still 300 thousand children who need to receive education. Since the biological process cannot be slowed down, these children grow every day, and education is the best way to protect these children against some radical terrorist groups like Da'esh. However, the financial assistance mechanism of the EU is functioning so slowly that losing a generation unfortunately does not seem to be an unfathomable possibility.

One of the things that we should be most proud of is the fact that Turkey has never had racist or anti-migrant rhetoric and policies while hosting three million refugees. This issue is never a part of the national political debate. The racist, anti-migrant, anti-refugee, xenophobic and Islamophobic approaches, which are rising in several EU Member States, have not been seen in Turkey. Turkey has halted the exploitation of the issue by the racist and far-right movements in Europe to some extent.

Finally, it should be noted that all refugees hosted in Turkey are treated with the best care. Representatives of the United Nations and other international institutions stated, during their working visits, that Turkey had raised the standards of refugee camps.

Dimitris Avramopoulos, European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship and Christos Stylianides, European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, have both noted that Turkey has realised a miracle regarding the refugees.

What is your opinion on Turkey-EU cooperation on the migrant crisis?

Migration has many times upset the European geopolitical order and the European political map throughout history. This is one of the greatest crises to upset the geopolitical order and the political map. However, as a result of Turkey's performance and the March 18 Turkey-EU Statement, the number of people crossing the Aegean Sea fell from 7 thousand people in one day to a mere 40 or 20. This is an example of what great deeds Turkey and the European Union can achieve if they act in unison.

Perhaps one of the greatest crises that the European Union has faced in its history has been prevented by the joint action plan and the common will between Turkey and the European Union. Had Turkey not displayed its capacity during this migrant crisis, had it not acted in shared wisdom and produced a joint action plan with the European Union, this would have turned into a crisis that could have upset the whole European geopolitical order.

As we witnessed in the latest migrant crisis, Turkey and the European Union

acted in shared wisdom and extremely effectively managed one of the greatest challenges and greatest crises that the European Union has ever faced.

The potential and the capacity Turkey showed in the face of great crises and great challenges will provide the basis on which to generate a foreign policy that promotes peace, enhances prosperity, and is more effective in humanitarian terms. Today, Europe needs a rejuvenation; it needs a new grafting and budding.

We are committed to the framework of the March 18 Turkey-EU Statement and are fulfilling our related obligations. We are doing this for humanitarian reasons, political reasons, and under the pacta sunt servanda principle. Visa liberalization is a key issue here. Once we reach agreement on this matter, we will see how quickly we will reach agreement in all the other matters.

We are presently not a member of the European Union but our country has been a major European power throughout its history. Today, we are a major European power and a major European democracy. Hence, visa liberalization cannot be simply a pleasant gesture towards Turkey, but is rather an outcome that must be reached because of a concluded agreement.

What are the influences of the migrant crisis on the architecture of European values?

Europe's becoming introverted because of the migrant crisis will mean the disappearance of the architecture of European values. A country is thinking of hosting one hundred migrants and they are debating whether to hold a referendum on this. Another country is saying, *"We cannot take migrants"* arguing that it would *"weaken their national identity"*. Behind this are such negative developments as cultural racism, Islamophobia and the rise of the far-right.

The European Union did not pass the test in protecting migrants, protecting people running from persecution and from their deaths. What did they do when they could not pass the test? In the face of the anti-migrant rhetoric and politics of the far-right, they developed approaches such as closing off their borders and employing isolationist policies. Who do you think will benefit from these migrants escaping from death when you exclude them? When you do that, you give them no opportunity apart from radicalism.

In many European countries and in many European Union Member States, which share democratic values, some

political parties portray these refugees, these people who are fleeing from death, as monsters in their banners and posters; and through their campaigns they promote the far-right, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and xenophobia. This is dangerous for the future of the European Union.

Hence, finding the right solutions to this problem is important for Europe's political future, for the protection of Europe's mainstream political movements, and for the protection of democracy. If they are not careful about this, then we will witness the rise of the far-right in Europe on one side and the rise of the jihadist and Salafi movements in the Middle East on the other, culminating in radicalization on both sides that would jeopardize global security. That is why there is a need for new mechanisms.

Let us not forget that if Turkey had not hosted these 3 million people, they would have all gone to Europe through the Mediterranean. There would have been many humanitarian tragedies. Far-right movements would have abused the migrant situation and changed the political map of Europe. Let me emphasize that what Turkey is doing is saving the future of Europe.

The EU considers the amendment of the Turkish Anti-Terrorism Law as a prerequisite for visa liberalisation. What is your opinion on this issue?

Turkey has a border of 1295 km with Syria and Iraq, both of which have a problem of authority, and Turkey fights against several terrorist organisations such as Da'esh, Al-Qaeda, DHKP-C, the PKK and FETO simultaneously. The purpose of the Anti-Terrorism Law is to maintain security in Turkey. However, it should not be forgotten that Turkey's fight against terrorism aims to provide the security of Europe both politically and geographically, and the security of European democracies and the EU as well; and the bond between these two is not just eclectic but also completely organic. For this reason, Turkey wants to see the EU by its side more in its fight against terrorism. Turkey should not be expected to change legistation, which would decrease its capacity to fight against terrorism in a period in which it carries out such an intense struggle against terrorism.

Asking Turkey *"to amend its Anti-Terrorism Law"* under these conditions would mean jeopardising security both in Turkey and in the EU. Nowadays, an issue in Mosul, al-Bab, or Raqqa is not simply a Middle East issue; it is also fast becoming a European Union issue.

If Turkey's counter-terrorism capacity is compromised, this will have as many repercussions for the European Union as it will for Turkey. Turkey has a 1295 km-long border with Iraq and Syria. Imagine Germany, the United Kingdom or France having that kind of border; imagine the measures that would have been taken in that case.

Is the EU sufficiently fulfilling its responsibilities to Turkey regarding the migrant crisis?

It is as if there is a grave air of lethargy in the European Union. By thinking *"this burden is already shared by Turkey and Greece and these two countries somehow manage to prevent the arrival of migrants,"* they are not fulfilling any of their responsibilities; they are not honouring any of their commitments. This is a turn of events that one might simply call disgraceful.

What Turkey is achieving is miraculous. Before the March 18 Turkey-EU Statement, 7 thousand people crossed the Aegean Sea in one day. This figure is now 20 to 30. Even on the night of the coup attempt, the figure did not reach 100. I say in Europe that this is like the "Migration of Tribes" in history. As in the previous migration wave, these events also could have changed the whole political map of Europe. It could have led to the reactionary far-right domination of the whole political map of Europe. Turkey has saved the political future of Europe.

The happiest news of all is that deaths in the Aegean Sea have almost reached zero. We no longer see the bodies of babies washed up ashore. We do not see the corpses on the shore like that of little Aylan's. This success is Turkey's success and the world needs to stand with Turkey.

However, we in fact see that some are saying *"we have already shifted this burden to Turkey, and Turkey and Greece are sharing this responsibility, this burden"* and are taking a step back.

We host almost 3 million refugees in Turkey, 800 thousand of whom are children. 300 thousand of these children are at the moment deprived of education. I have called upon the EU authorities several times; the funds necessary for the education of these children should be allocated. However, EU funding is grindingly slow.

Such a great problem should be handled by the entire international system together; they need to fulfill their responsibilities. In providing support in terms of mechanisms and providing financial assistance, the European Union is late and is functioning very slowly, which, unfortunately, causes the humanitarian tragedy before our eyes to escalate even more.

We still believe that the European Union unfortunately does not sufficiently honour its commitments in this regard. The mechanism that the European Union uses to transfer this financial assistance is so slow that I fear these primary school children will have reached retirement age by the time the financial assistance arrives.


CNN
TÜRK

You host more than 3 million Syrian refugees. Does that have any negative effect on Turkish domestic politics or the social structure of the country?

We constantly express in our meetings that, as a European state and a European democracy, Turkey is the only country in which no racist or fascist discourse has been used against refugees; we are very proud of this.

As a politician, I will always be proud of the fact that we host 3 million refugees in our country, but that they have never been used as material for domestic politics. Never has a racist political movement against them arisen. In my country, never has any political party assumed a stance against refugees in any election campaign or in any political discourse.

None of the political parties in Turkey have placed refugees at the centre of political discussions and have never used them as material for politics, and that there has been no racist or fascist discourse against refugees in mainstream politics.

Millions of refugees in Turkey have never been made the subject of political debate. We are in full solidarity with these people.

How do you evaluate EU's inability to develop common policies in many fields?

We have not seen an effective and unanimously agreed political approach for a long time in the EU, especially on foreign policy matters. In fact Europe had always come out of various crises stronger. But now it cannot manage two crises (euro and migrants) and it is losing power. For instance, in matters such as Syria and Iraq, which concern the entire world, it cannot develop a common European policy agreed by 28 countries. Today the Syria policies of Turkey, Russia, USA and Iran are clear but the aim of the EU is not.

In fact, the crisis in Turkey-EU relations is in a way a reflection of the crisis of values in Europe and the inability of the European Union to produce a common policy within itself. In this context, developing common European policies actually can only be possible through the continuation of the enlargement of the European Union. The moment you stop the enlargement of the European Union it faces racist, Islamophobic and anti-Semitic trends and Islamophobia within itself.

Restricting the European values within the European geography strengthens the *"Euroscepticism"* in Europe. That is why we indicate that the EU must include Turkey in its enlargement process in order to be a global power.

It is known today that the EU is struggling with crises. What do you think is the main problem in the EU?

Europe faces an organic crisis. This means that there is a question of a *"democracy that cannot rule"*. There is an ongoing crisis regarding values. The migrant crisis reflects a serious crisis regarding human rights in the EU. The fight against the extreme right reflects a serious crisis regarding the rule of law. The Turkey-EU accession negotiations, as well as other matters relating to Turkey, reflect a serious crisis for the EU. I feel that these should be fully considered.

European people are angry at politicians because of their failure to solve problems. Politicians have been unable to adopt a visionary approach towards the migrant crisis and are in a quandary on the economic crisis, fighting the extreme right and terrorism. This leads to pessimism and more introverted, nationalist reactions from the people. If the weakness in the enlargement policies leads to a reaction of inward-looking policies, this may lead to problems across the entire continent, including the Balkans.

The European Union has created a supra-identity. If it is not possible to formulate a foreign policy within the context of this supra-identity and if

countries go back to their national identities, this means a return to pre-World War II conditions.

In the past, the EU used to get stronger with each crisis, turning these into opportunities. The crises used to help the EU to identify its shortcomings, just like an illness. The EU used to develop new capacities and mechanisms that would eliminate those shortcomings. And now, the EU adopts a policy which surrenders to crises and extends them over a period of time. In fact, the migrant crisis, the economic crisis as well as the enlargement policy regarding Turkey were the right platforms for Europe to create a stronger future, if only it would accurately assess these issues and place them seriously on the agenda.

The European Union has to start taking measures for its future. New reforms are essential. It is time for us all to think about Europe's reconstruction. It is clear that the EU needs renewed enthusiasm, credibility, a renewed point of view and a fresh start. Such a beginning will necessitate putting forth a bolder attitude towards Turkey.

For a long time, the European Union has turned into an institution that only publishes declarations. Are the bodies of the EU political ones or judicial ones, or do they only produce criticisms like think-tanks? This has become very confusing.

The concern today should not be with producing anti-virus programs where the software is insufficient in case of crises. In fact, the software itself needs to be updated. The world has been going through a crisis of vision, and the achievements of Europe have fallen behind. References to the previous achievements of Europe are no longer meaningful. Politics is about securing the future and introducing a prospective project to the people. This is our common continent and this is our common responsibility.

Have the relations between Turkey and Russia developed so as to be an alternative to Turkey-EU relations?

Our close cooperation continues with our neighbour Russia, with whom we have always had good relations throughout history, as well as Europe. For instance, we have always had special relations with Russia in terms of tourism, the energy sector, and the economy. Furthermore, President Vladimir Putin was one of those who first called our President after the July 15 coup attempt. Our relations have become integrated. We, of course, have differences on such issues like Syria and Crimea. However, we manage to put our differences aside and make progress in other fields within the context of bilateral cooperation.

Moreover, the relations between Turkey and Russia do not pose a threat for the Europe; in fact it is an element facilitating international communication. Russia also develops close cooperation with Europe. A Turkey, which continues its negotiations for full membership to the EU, maintains close relations with Russia and is an ally of the USA, continues to have ties in the Middle East, develops its relations with Africa and opens out to Latin America is to the benefit of the entire world. There is no rule that says establishing good relations with one party negatively affects relations with others.

What will Turkey's place be in the post-Brexit picture of Europe?

No matter what kind of Europe emerges after Brexit, it is a fact that Turkey will consolidate its position in that picture. Any picture that excludes Turkey will be incomplete. Turkey is an indispensable part of the existing dynamism around the European Union and will be a decisive and powerful actor in Europe's reconstruction.

Although the United Kingdom has taken the decision to leave the EU, this does not mean an exit from Europe. The UK has historically been a strong European country. It will maintain its strong ties with Europe from now on. The UK expresses its wish to maintain these strong ties. Even though Turkey is not a member of the EU, it is historically a European state, a large European power and has been a European democracy for a century. Despite all these developments, Turkey and the UK are both concerned about the preservation and strength of European order and welfare.

In the aftermath of Brexit, considering the incidents in Iraq and Syria as well as the migrant crisis in Europe, rising racism, the economic crisis and the new era in the USA, Turkey is a country central to the agenda. I hope that the assessments will be made accordingly.

Turkey will continue to establish and maintain the vision that the EU is supposed to possess. We speak inside, not outside, of Europe. Turkey has always contributed to Europe's security and welfare. Turkey will continue to protect these values despite the statements of leaders which hamper the security, future and welfare of the EU and the protection of such values.

There are very few eras in world history during which the past remains the past and the future will be newly built with new risks and new crises... If the big picture over the European continent after Brexit is correctly evaluated by taking into account the developments in the Balkans, the presidential elections in the USA as well as the incidents in Iraq and Syria, it is necessary to prepare an appropriate political agenda that centralizes Turkey, using the proper language. We are, in fact, clearly putting this picture to the consideration of everyone. Our countries should have a vision based on producing a common future, common welfare and common security. This is not an ordinary period, when time can be wasted due to the absence of vision.

What are your views on minority rights?

Regarding minorities, I can confidently say that minority rights and standards are upheld in Turkey at a level that does not exist in Europe.

The property confiscated unduly in the past has been restituted. Improvements have been made regarding foundations. I follow the approaches of the EU Member States in this respect. I can say that there is no other country that has reached the standards achieved by Turkey in this area.

What do you think about the European Parliament's call for "freezing the negotiations" with Turkey?

You can be sure that those who say "the accession negotiations with Turkey should be frozen" are not friends of the EU; they are racists. Unfortunately, the call to freeze the negotiations has been made because of a lack of vision and short-sightedness of certain mainstream politicians who do not want to lose votes to marginal racist or fascist parties in their countries.

Although Turkey is not an EU Member State, it has been a notable European power which has always needed to be taken into account throughout its history. For a hundred years, Turkey has been a European democracy. We will continue on the same path just as before. As the Minister for EU Affairs, I would not wish for an interruption in Turkey-EU relations. I believe that Turkey's perspective of EU membership also corresponds to its national interests. However, there is one thing that the EU Member States need to consider: If Turkey breaks relations with the EU, this will not be to the advantage of the EU. The EU will not benefit from such an outcome.

The European Parliament's resolution to freeze the negotiations today is a narrow-minded political resolution bereft of vision, which is not legally binding in any way. Some Members of Parliament (MEP) think that they should deliver a message to Turkey. If they had an intention to give a message to Turkey, it would be better for them to positively seek ways of cooperating over issues such as the rule of law and democracy with a country, which showed democratic resistance to a coup attempt. Instead, they adopted this resolution, approving a draft which will go down in history as a very unfortunate one.

This resolution adopted within the European Union demonstrates how far the European Union, as a peace and welfare project, has moved away from its ideals. Therefore, I consider this as a resolution which concerns the crisis of the European Union rather than Turkey. We observe with regret that the European politicians have forgotten the dramatic historical experiences the continent went through, which also paved the way for the establishment of the European Union.

You said that the European Union consistently develops discourse over a negative agenda in its relations with Turkey. Could you please elaborate on this?

The European Union must establish an *"ecosystem"* which includes a positive agenda with Turkey. The problem is that this "ecosystem" has been poisoned for a long time. Accession negotiations provide a basis for negotiation and cooperation; they should therefore involve a positive agenda. It is the most irrational thing at this stage to use a dismissive and accusatory tone against Turkey. It is appropriate to establish a language of cooperation.

We don't judge whether these resolutions are critical or not. Any resolution, even if it is fully critical, is of value for us and we benefit from it as long as it promotes a positive agenda, is constructive and opens the way for development.

That the European Union offers definitions only within the context of a negative agenda in its approach to Turkey does not promote the process, and it is no longer possible for us to carry on in the current state of affairs. We need a game-changer. Today, there are crises, which Europe has to resolve.

Europe's future is our common future,

Europe's security is our common security and Europe's welfare is our common welfare. We are a natural part of Europe and an integral element of this history. Consequently, those attitudes which persistently blame, exclude or alienate, instead of finding solutions to the problems do not benefit anyone at this stage.

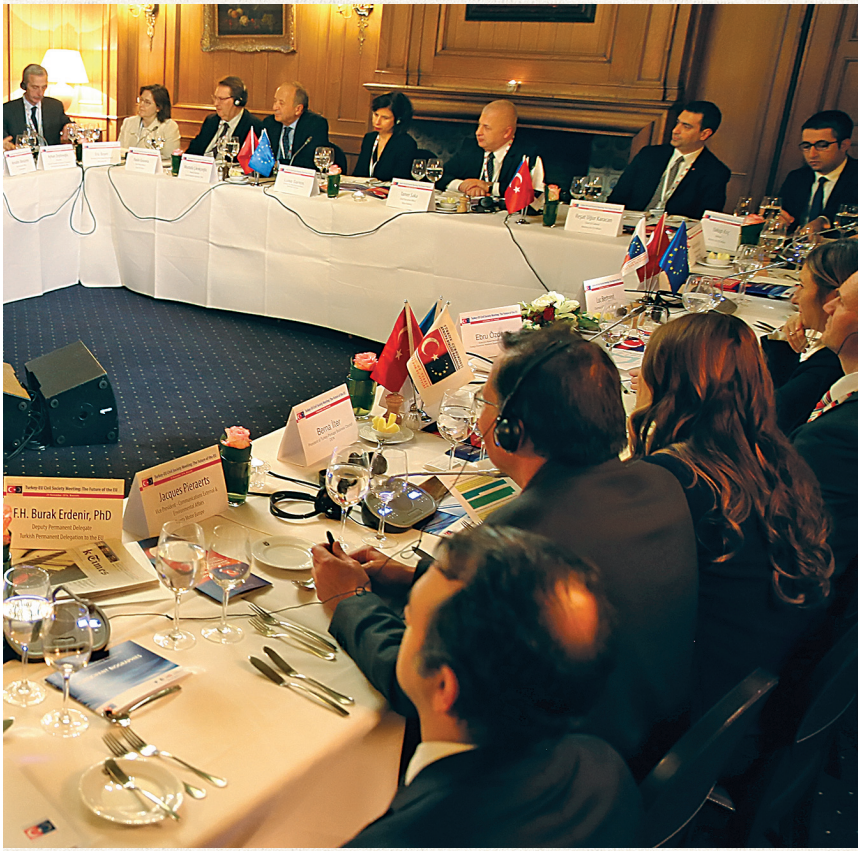
The European Union is not a think-tank organisation. However, it has transformed into a think-tank organisation which is never satisfied and criticises constantly, but provides no solution. This is not a good way to make a policy. Unfortunately the main element observed in the speeches made on behalf of the European Union, and especially in the attitudes towards Turkey today, is a lack of vision which must be remedied. The agenda should be filled with items pertaining to how progress can be made together with Turkey.

For instance, the European Union shows considerable weakness in promoting a positive agenda on Turkey, yet it attempts to question Turkey's relations with Russia or other countries with which Turkey has traditionally had relations. Turkey has to maintain multidimensional relations, both with Europe and Russia, and other countries, given its historical and geopolitical location.

It is necessary to consider concepts such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law as a part and the basis of our common agenda. As these concepts are instrumentalized, they create a tsunami effect in European Union countries and cause a rise in the extreme right, racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

Therefore, one has to be consistent in these issues.

We expect the EU to become an entity which presents a consistent vision, and to act accordingly. If that happens, the EU will once again become a source of motivation for our reform process.



What is your opinion on the crisis in Turkey-EU relations in the recent period?

What has gone on between the European Union and Turkey recently does not demonstrate a crisis over Turkey- EU relations; rather, it is a reflection of the crisis which the European Union and the European Parliament face concerning their values. In other words, it is not a crisis between Turkey and the European Union. It is more a reflection of the crisis of the political values and political inconsistency the European Union has come to face within itself with regards to Turkey. The EU is reflecting its internal crisis onto Turkey. Institutions which were established to protect human rights, the rule of law and democracy are not responding appropriately to defend these values.

In fact, all of the criticisms which have been directed at Turkey recently fall within Chapters 23 and 24. Hiding behind seemingly objective excuses such as human rights and democracy and then not opening the relevant chapters and pressuring Turkey over the political criteria clearly demonstrates the severe crisis which Europe has been in for a long time, with regards to enlargement and renewing its own institutions.

The issue is no longer the "Turkey issue". The issue for the European Union is how to build a sensible future so as to update its mechanisms and institutions to overcome the crises it encounters. It is now time to show common sense and remain calm; it is now time to find solutions to the challenges we face through wisdom and common sense. The issue of Turkey should in no way become a part of the election process of any country.

You indicated that you considered the EU as being insincere in its relations with Turkey. Would you please expand on this?

The accession negotiations are based on opening of the relevant chapters and carrying out negotiations in this respect. The chapters which are the essence of the EU accession negotiations are Chapters 23 and 24, where issues such as justice, security and freedom will be discussed. I extend an invitation here. When you talk about human rights and the rule of law, do not assume that we fear those concepts. Let us come together and discuss those concepts realistically.

However, when Turkey is criticized on related matters without the opening of the relevant chapters, concepts such as democracy, human rights and the rule of

law are not used to advance and create a positive agenda together, but used simply as political leverage in foreign policy to pressure Turkey. Concepts such as human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and Turkey-EU relations cannot be used politically to pressure a country.

These cannot be used for political leverage. On the one hand, Chapters 23 and 24, which are on the matters of freedom of expression, rule of law and balance between freedom and security, are not opened, and on the other hand Turkey is constantly criticized in these areas. What would happen then? Under these circumstances, the rule of law, democracy and human rights are no longer shared values but become only political instruments.

The EU says that it has certain concerns regarding Turkey. We respond to all of these. The roots of these concerns are in certain chapters. We need to open these chapters and work on them together to eliminate these concerns. Opening chapters is not a gesture of good will but is the mechanism of the negotiations themselves. It would be an approach bereft of vision to continue criticising us on the content of these chapters without opening them.

What is your opinion about the EU's approach of "not opening new chapters"?

The approach of not opening the chapters to negotiations is unfair to the Turkish people, who have fought for democracy against the coup attempt. If we are determined to share democratic values, defending democracy today means siding with Turkey. Defending democracy today is to support democracy on a global level and to be on the side of the Turkish people, who have made sacrifices for democracy. Defending democracy today means to support Turkey's fight to protect democracy from terrorist organizations. Otherwise, no one can claim to be sincere about defending democracy.

If democratic values, human rights and the rule of law are the priority in our common agenda, then Turkey should be hailed and applauded, and there should be solidarity with it. A negative approach to Turkey distances Europe from its own values.

If you had to make a choice, which one would you prefer: Democracy or the rule of law?

The rule of law is more important than democracy because Socrates was put to death by a vote.

Without the rule of law, a vote can result in the execution of someone like Socrates. Concepts such as the rule of law, democracy and human rights have been developed for human beings to live in dignity. These concepts should not be used in domestic politics or to pressure another country in forthcoming elections. These are universal values which we share.

Do you think the size of the Turkish population is in any way a determinant in Turkey-EU relations?

In fact, the concern is with Turkey's size and whether a country of this size would change the balances in Europe. Yes, the balances would change. Turkey will change the balance in favour of increasing security in Europe. Turkey will change the balances in favour of increasing welfare in Europe. It is clear that Turkey will change the balances in a way that will enhance the capacity of the EU to solve its current problems by 90%.

Does Turkey expect concessions, given the fact that it is a very large country?

I am telling them: *No we do not want any concession. But demands should not be increased either.*

We do not expect positive discrimination, but we are opposed to negative discrimination too. Turkey does not expect concessions in its relations with the European Union, but demands should not be increased and double standards should not be introduced when it comes to Turkey.

Turkey does not expect concessions regarding the negotiation of chapters or any other matter. But you should not increase demands regarding criteria when it comes to Turkey, a strategic partner.

What is your opinion on the EU enlargement policy?

The enlargement policy is an instrument of democratization and stability that aims to strengthen the EU as a regional and global actor. For this reason, the enlargement policy is a long-term strategic concept that cannot be measured by short-term considerations. If the weakness in the enlargement policies causes a response of introverted policies, this may lead to problems in the entire continent, including the Balkans.

The EU should consider Turkey as a part of its *"enlargement policy"* rather than its *"neighbourhood policy"* .

We need to establish a framework for the future of Turkey-EU relations. This is our common future. We have been European since the reign of the Ottoman Sultan Murad I. Islam has been in Europe since the 7th century. Sound decisions have to be made regarding all these discussions so that a political union can emerge from a meaningful political philosophy. It emerges from a sound paradigm. Today, there is a paradigmatic dissolution and fragmentation in the political philosophy. To remedy this, the enlargement policy should be used to integrate a large country like Turkey with a majority of Muslim population. This has the potential to favourably contribute to a change in the balances of Europe.

Is it true that Turkey-EU relations have been reduced to the migration issue recently?

Together with the migration issue, a new momentum emerged in Turkey and the EU relations recently. But we are always saying that Turkey-EU relations should not be limited only to the migration issue. This should be embedded into a great vision. Turkey has been a European power throughout its history. Turkey-EU relations which are constantly reduced to migration and fight against terrorism is out of the question. This is a broader agenda, a big picture and the strategic links of Turkey-EU relations should always be underlined.

Reducing the issue merely to the matter of migration would be to perceive Turkey as a "human warehouse" or a "concentration camp". This is something that we cannot accept.

Turkey-EU relations should be embedded in a broader vision and framework, which cannot be reduced to merely the migration issue, and this relationship should be addressed in political and other aspects. This is vital not only to manage the temporary political crises but it is also the time to consider it as an existential issue.

The migration issue has been a means to launch a new period in Turkey-EU relations, but Turkey-EU relations should never be reduced merely to the migration issue.

Can it be said that Turkey protects the freedom-security balance in its fight against terrorism?

The reforms we have made so far and the reforms we are committed to pursue, as well as our sensitivity to protect the freedom-security balance, even when targeted by this massive terrorist attack, are noteworthy. In this context, we would like to see all our friends, and primarily our friends in the European Union, stand with Turkey in its fight against terrorism; we expect their strong support in this matter.

Turkey has never compromised on the balance between freedoms and security, while also ensuring security under the harshest conditions. It has never allowed the freedom security balance to turn into securitization in a way that would harm freedoms and suffocate democracy. Yet, it is essential that Turkey's security needs be met. There can be no compromise on that.

TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ
AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ BAKANLIĞI

What kind of a relationship is there between Turkey's security and Europe's security?

As a sovereign country, Turkey's protection of its own borders contributes indirectly to the protection of Europe's security. Thus weakness in Turkey's security implies weakness in the security of Europe and NATO.

Similarly, a Europe, furnished with democratic values and stable on the grounds of democracy, is highly important for Turkey's national security. It should be so.

Turkey, as a European state, performs excellently in terms of fighting against terrorist organizations such as Da'esh and the PKK with a view to ensuring its security and Europe's security. Furthermore, Turkey, which has been a European democracy for a century, demonstrated how a nation protects its democracy during the July 15 coup attempt.

Turkey protects its borders as a sovereign state, but at the same time it protects Europe's borders. When we take all these into consideration, we would like to focus on this aspect of the issue: Do you continue to meet your commitments as you promised or not? This is what we would like to see.

If Turkey did not engage in a high-capacity fight against terrorism, then Europe would have had to face this phenomenon of terrorism directly. Therefore, Turkey deserves to be appreciated for its efforts. A weakness in Turkey's fight against Da'esh, the PKK, or FETO would not only threaten the security of Turkey but also that of the European Union. Therefore, we would like to underline that the support of our friends in our fight not only against Da'esh, but also against the FETO and the PKK terrorist organisations is highly important.

Turkey's borders are naturally the borders of Europe and NATO. Therefore, the security measures Turkey takes have direct relevance for the security of Europe and NATO.

What is your opinion about the use of the words Islam and terrorism together?

Some radical terrorists exploit Islam and Muslims. That is the main point. Saying *"Muslimhood and Islam are turning into radical terrorism"* means that one is missing that main point. Because some terrorists exploit a religion and the symbols of that religion, that religion must not be linked to terrorism. If you do not fight against Islamophobia sufficiently, what comes after is anti-Semitism, xenophobia and hostility directed against the European Union.

We must fight against terrorism together. We must always emphasize that terrorism has no nationality, no religion and no identity. Those who use the words Islam and terrorism together are in fact playing into the hands of Al-Qaeda and Da'esh in terms of ideology and are enabling them to make huge gains. Referring to a religion along with terrorism means you are providing ideological fuel to those who exploit religion and conduct terrorist attacks.

What is your opinion about the extreme right movements which are on the rise in Europe?

Just as we feel an obligation to fight against terrorist organizations like Da'esh in our region, we will also continue to fight against the far right, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and antagonism towards Turkey, which is placed right at the centre of these issues. This fight is for the future of the region, continent, and the world at large.

The hate spread and the values targeted by the organizations using this radical terrorist argument, and the values targeted by the far-right and racist elements in Europe are the same. They share the same genetic blueprint; they are identical twins. If these are not confronted adequately and strongly through mainstream political values and if they are given credit for the sake of elections or for other reasons, then they will at some point dominate the main political arena.

We are confronted by substantial challenges. The migrant crisis, followed by the fight against Da'esh and similar terrorist organizations, and the fight against far-right movements in Europe, which share the same anti-humanitarianism as Da'esh and similar terrorist organizations… All these need to be tackled as aspects of a single issue. When we consider all of these, Turkey emerges as a key country.

The racist and fascist political movements in Europe and movements like the terrorist organization Da'esh are political twins. When one rises, so does the other and they owe their existence to each other. There is no difference between the radicalism that terrorist organizations, such as Da'esh, generate and the radicalism that the far-right generates to the north of our country, in Europe. Everybody will have to face the painful consequences of this and measures have to be taken against them.

There is a great deal we have to do together against the rising far-right movements and xenophobia in Europe, the terrorist organizations in our region, as well as Islamophobic and anti-Semitic movements. The same goes for the fight against terrorism.

The rising far-right movements and similar movements in Europe threaten our shared democratic values. In the same vein, the rising terrorist wave to the south of our country, perpetrated by terrorist organizations such as Da'esh, the PKK, and PYD also threaten our common values. The territory of Europe, European security, and European values seem to have been entrapped in brackets. As with the migrant issue, a rapprochement between Turkey and the European Union and the building of closer links will break these brackets and change this vicious circle.

What would you like to say about the fight against extremist movements?

As the fall of the Berlin Wall was a positive milestone in the past, today, the rise of the far-right and populist nationalism is a negative one. Tens of Berlin Walls are being built in Europe at the moment. To prevent this, we will warn the European people.

We make the same call upon Europe's progressives, Europe's real democrats, to those who remain loyal to the founding values of the European Union: we need to fight Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and hostility to migrants together so as to genuinely protect this pluralism.

As Turkey, we are trying to accede to a Union that is not dominated by the far-right discourse and where diversity, democracy and human rights are upheld.

A European Union project in which democracy, human rights and diversity are upheld is a strategic goal for Turkey. However, a European Union that does not protect these values and that is sliding into this racist tendency is not an option for Turkey.

Far-right movements and anti-migrant and anti-refugee movements are on the rise in Europe. In the face of all these, we have to think together about the future of Europe and develop new policies for our common future. We believe that we must work together, not only for the management of the refugee issue, but for the fight against terrorist organizations such as Da'esh and Al-Qaeda and others, and also for the advancement of a Europe, based on values and protected from far-right racist movements.

What kind of relation do you think there is between hostility towards Turkey, Islamophobia, Europhobia, xenophobia and anti-Semitism?

Those that create Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and xenophobia are the same elements in the far-right. However, when you pull up all the veils and look into the depths, you see that these are in fact Europhobic elements that are hostile towards Europe.

Those who march with antagonism towards Turkey, concealing Islamophobia

and anti-Semitism in this concept, are in fact turning this into political ground for Europhobia. Any support granted to this movement by mainstream politicians without taking into consideration the sensitivities related to this issue, or any approach that prefers to turn a blind eye on this or allows this to happen for domestic political considerations cause the far-right to gain even more power in their own countries and the values of the European Union to weaken.

When we lift the veil of antagonism towards Turkey, we find Islamophobia underneath, and underneath Islamophobia is anti-Semitism, and underneath that is Europhobia. Thus, the people who are involved in this are not Europhiles. On the contrary, they are those that have a hostile attitude towards the fundamental values of the European Union.

Antagonism towards Turkey is in its essence Europhobia. Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and antagonism towards the European Union are in fact different expressions of the same distorted mentality. People who are promoting antagonism towards Turkey or Islamophobia are not doing this because they are Europhiles. They are doing it because they are against the values of the European Union. If Islam and Turkey were not on the current agenda in Europe, then there would be hate speech directed at other races and other elements within Europe.

You refer to a matryoshka doll in terms of far right movements. Could you please explain?

There exists a political matryoshka doll. I feel I must warn you about the future of Europe within the framework of the European vision. The outmost part of this matryoshka doll is Erdoğan-phobia; hostility directed against the Turkish President Erdoğan, antagonism towards him. Everybody is focused on that; it is as though you could not talk without making some remark about opposing him. But, let us continue, when we lift the first matryoshka doll, there appears Turkey-phobia underneath it. Promoting antagonism against Turkey is in fact helping the far-right within the European countries rise up. When you lift that layer, there appears Islamophobia. Under Islamophobia, you find anti-Semitism, and then racism. When you reach the innermost doll, you find Europhobia at the root. Therefore, Erdoğan-phobes, Turkey-phobes, Islamophobes and anti-Semites are not Europhiles but rather they are opposed to Europe. Although you are EU leaders, you are still lured into this narrative and eventually it is the far right that profits from this; you should not do this.

Do you think that that the level of cooperation between Turkey and the EU on the fight against terrorism is adequate?

With the migrant crisis, we have witnessed how the European Union and Turkey, acting in shared wisdom and with a joint action plan, managed to solve a global problem. Therefore, we should also create a joint action plan against terrorism, which has become an even greater issue that threatens European values, as well as the fundamental values of humanity. Solidarity alone is not enough, a common discourse alone is not enough; we need to create a joint action plan.

Involved in accession negotiations, Turkey has a special relationship with the European Union. In the framework of that special relationship, the EU could have supported Turkey in the fight against Da'esh in Syria, thereby becoming part of that picture, but they have not done that. Thus, such a large union, which is economically colossal, is performing very weakly in terms of foreign policy.

You have referred to a double standard concerning the fight against terrorism. What did you wish to say?

Terrorism is terrorism; it has different offshoots. One such offshoot is Da'esh, another is the PKK, another is DHKP-C, or any other terrorist organization anywhere in the world. There is no difference between terrorist organizations; Da'esh is no different from the PKK, and the PKK is no different from DHKP-C. Therefore, whenever we see that a PKK tent is allowed to be put up in a European capital, we see this as no different from allowing Da'esh to put up a tent.

There can be no *"but"* or *"yet"* when we talk about terrorism. We cannot make compromises in our approach against a terrorist organization. A principled approach must be developed against them.

I explain clearly to my counterparts that there is a need for a joint action plan that does not prioritize or discriminate among terrorist organizations such as Da'esh and the PKK, and targets them altogether. This is as much important for Turkey's security as it is for European security, and the security of the world at large.

When Turkey fights Da'esh, it fights terrorism. When it fights the PKK and PYD, it fights terrorism too. Hence,


TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ
AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ BAKANLIĞI
REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
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commending one of these but criticizing the other would be to employ a double standard in terms of terrorism. We see it very clearly: the PYD has a hidden agenda that could in no way contribute to peace in the region, Turkey's security, or Europe's security; this hidden agenda is filled with terrorist links.

There is no difference between the terrorist organizations Da'esh and the PKK. If countries fighting against Da'esh allow the PKK to hold exhibitions and put up tents, this leads to a double standard in terms of fight against terrorism.

The reasoning that the PKK stops being a terrorist organization because it does not carry out attacks in Europe, but that *"all must fight against Da'esh"* because it attacks Europe is a distorted one. Turkey is a sovereign country and does not see any difference between Da'esh and the PKK in terms of its national security, which is the right approach.

Remember how Afghanistan used to be, remember what using one terrorist organization against another did to Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the same mistake is being made right beside the Mediterranean, right next to Turkey, in a country so close to Europe. One terrorist organization is pitted against another. To think that a terrorist organization is going to conduct a genuinely principled fight

against another terrorist organization, with which it shares the same genetic blueprint, is highly questionable in the modern world.

There is sympathy in some parts of Europe for members of the PKK terrorist organization. In reality, there is no difference between Da'esh and the PKK. Some terrorists, while they are members of Da'esh, may act like PKK members and some PKK terrorists may act like Da'esh members to conceal their own identity. We see the emergence of a more hybrid definition of terrorism and terrorist methods. In this respect, we are advancing through a period during which new dangers arise for those that make distinctions between terrorist organizations or terrorists. We must have more intense cooperation in this regard.

When Da'esh conducts a terrorist attack in Turkey, we receive very strong messages of alliance from our allies and friends but we do not see enough support when the PKK conducts a terrorist attack. This is a clear picture. It is a picture of double standards.

We do not accept a hierarchy or categorization of terrorist organizations. We believe that the West must assume the attitude that they take against Da'esh against the PKK and the FETO terrorist organizations as well.

How do you define Fethullah Gülen's terrorist organization (FETO)?

The FETO is an organization hostile to democracy, society and the public institutions. Hence, we do not accept the claim that this is turning into an investigation of legitimate personalities as judges, academics and journalists. This terrorist organization is the author of atrocities that are inimical to humanity and to the nation, and which would even surpass the Nazis in European history.

Nazis were amateurs compared to the FETO terrorist organization. They would be elementary school students compared to FETO. This is an organization that massacred its own people with fighter jets, tanks, battleships, and helicopters. Nobody should think that we will back down from fighting against them.

The fight against the FETO is not merely a political decision of our government. It is an existential decision for our country, for our state. It is out of the question to give up on that resolve. We are fighting against a structure that wishes to build an autocratic regime and abolish the secular, democratic legal order in Turkey for the sake of a deviant religious belief.

Did the solidarity expected between Turkey and the EU emerge after the coup attempt?

Upon the terrorist attack against Charlie Hebdo in France, many leaders including the Prime Minister of Turkey, visited France and demonstrated solidarity with the French democracy and its people.

However, in the past year, many attacks that were more serious than Charlie Hebdo occurred in Turkey. Turkey even faced a coup attempt which used tanks and fighter jets; but unfortunately, it is not possible to say that our friends in Europe and the European democracies displayed the solidarity expected towards Turkey.

With the exception of the UK Minister of State for Europe Alan Duncan, who visited Turkey within the first weeks of the coup attempt, visitors from EU began to arrive one and a half months later. As stated by the Former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland, this coup attempt took place against a European state and a European democracy within the territory of Europe. Under these circumstances, we would have expected the EU officials to demonstrate greater solidarity with Turkey.

Had such solidarity been demonstrated, first, the message would have been given that the European Union also supports the democracies outside its borders facing difficulties, and that coups are unacceptable.

Second, this would have made an impact on the ideology of extremist terrorist organizations such as Da' esh that aimed to attract youthful recruits. As today, overcoming the ideologies of terrorist organizations such as Da'esh is more important than militarily defeating these organisations.

For example, the reply by Tunisian politician Rachid Ghannouchi to the question: *"Where was Osama Bin Laden killed?"* was: *"He was not killed in Pakistan but in Tunisia"*. He said this because by coming to power through democracy, they, the Muslims in Tunisia, had refuted Osama Bin Laden's message to the youth which was: *"Even if you come to power through democracy, there will certainly be a coup against your power; therefore, only thing to be done is to join al-Qaeda and fight against the West"*.

If the EU had given a strong message of solidarity, after the coup attempt in Turkey, this would have been an effective message also for the terrorist organizations resorting to radicalism.

How should Turkey-EU relations evolve considering regional and global instabilities?

Under these conditions of ethnic and sectarian conflicts, as well as economic instability, the enhancement of the feeling of unity by embracing Turkey in this regard are necessary for the national interests of each EU Member State.

The move that made the Roman Empire a global power was connecting the continent of Europe to Anatolia as a natural extension of it. This is also true today. In other words, as a global power, the EU can keep these values alive only with the help of Turkey.

Why is it important to keep the channels of communication between Turkey and the EU open?

We find the words of Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel to be highly significant: *"Let us not talk about each other, but talk to each other".* We have been talking about each other for a long time. But in fact, we need to talk to each other and keep the channels of dialogue open.

For instance, the officials from the European Commission sometimes make statements criticizing the authoritarianism in the EU Member States like Poland and Hungary, and express dissatisfaction with Donald Trump's election as the US President and concern over the developments in Turkey. Nevertheless, no one sets forth approaches regarding the expulsion of Poland or Hungary from EU membership or disengaging with the USA.

However, when it comes to Turkey, they bring up proposals such as the halting of talks and negotiations. The reason for this is stated to be the negative attitude of the European public towards Turkey. However, politicians themselves make statements that poison and mislead the public opinion and consequently, these prejudices become institutionalized. The relations between governments may have their ups and downs but public circles need to be in a close relationship.

We need to continue dialogue because it is necessary for the resolution of the problems. While the political dialogue between Turkey and the EU's official circles continues, it is desirable that direct dialogue be maintained directly between journalists, academicians, non-governmental organizations and businessmen.

With regard to the improvement of the dialogue, we expect the EU to choose a reasonable and balanced discourse that is more cautious, balanced, forward-looking and which keeps its channels of cooperation open. Turkey and the EU need to create a language for solidarity and partnership, not competition.

How do you see the future of Turkey-EU relations?

We are at a time when much stronger bridges need to be built and a higher level of cooperation needs to be achieved between Turkey and the EU to progress even further in the context of the potential and added value of the cooperation. The relations between Turkey and the EU have a much higher and more important strategic context than any other kind of relationship.

Throughout history, we have been a European power, and today, we are a powerful European democratic country. Since nobody can change this reality, the theory will have to conform to the reality in time if the former conflicts with the latter.

No matter how the process is undertaken, as a European power and democratic country, Turkey will never be a peripheral country. Turkey will always be a central country. Turkey will continue to express its opinion as a country that speaks from inside Europe to ensure that the EU becomes an ever-stronger union which promotes the messages of peace more properly.

Today is the day to build new bridges between Turkey and the EU.

Today is the day to open new channels of dialogue between Turkey and the EU. Today is the day to establish strong relations between Turkey and the EU. We can turn this turmoil into an opportunity for Turkey-EU relations. We can start a new agenda, a new process by means of constructive criticism and a positive agenda when it comes to the settlement of issues both in Europe and in our region.

In fact, July 15 is the day that everyone witnessed Turkey's high level of democratic consciousness. Let us have an environment where no one gives lessons to anyone else, no one points their finger at any one, where we shake hands and meet at a table and continue to speak freely on equal ground.

Turkey is a Balkan country, a Black Sea country, a Mediterranean country, an Islamic country, a democratic country and an Asian country, but also, as a historical fact, a European country, and it has been a European democracy for a century. Turkish people have demonstrated to the whole world their adherence to democracy with their resistance to the heinous July 15 coup attempt. Turkey will continue on its own reform path in order to improve its own democracy, legal order and economy.

In the name of humanity, democracy and values, it is necessary for all of us to mount an entirely new challenge to extreme right movements and xenophobia, which are on the rise in Europe; and against the inhumane terrorist organizations in the South which kill people, hiding behind the sacred concepts of Islam. It is necessary for us to extend a call to the world, and talk within the framework of this call.

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