

Is the ecumenical patriarchate in Turkey waiting for Godot?

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Since the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) came to power in 2002, the reopening of the Halki Seminary has repeatedly returned to the political agenda in Turkey.

There is almost a pattern. Some government officials say, “There is no harm in reopening the school [which was closed down in 1971], and there are some preparations taking place to that effect.” If you read these statements you can get the (wrong) impression that there is only technical work needing to be done, and the government is working on it. For the last seven years, we have heard exactly the same story. But, in the end, nothing comes out. Why?

Because the Halki Seminary is only a part of a much more complex question that may not be well appreciated even by the government itself. The question is namely

the existence of the ecumenical patriarchate in Turkey. There is a deep-rooted state policy that has brought the patriarchate to the verge of total extinction. This policy was shaped during the late Ottoman and early republican era and has been applied vigorously since then. This is a policy of taking gradual steps to push this historical institution into a corner to force it to choose one of the two options: Either it will stay in Turkey and will lose everything slowly and painfully, or it will leave Turkey once and for all. ([περισσότερα...](#))