

# **TURKEY AND THE ROAD TO EUROPE**

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## ABSTRACT

*In 1999 Turkey was given candidate status by the European Heads of State and Government, which led to the opening of accession negotiations on October 2005. These, which began more than four decades after Turkey's application for association with the European Economic Community in 1959, represented the decision of Europe's leaders, who were motivated by the impressive reforms and economic growth in the country. At the same time, though, the potential accession of Turkey raised awareness about the challenges associated with its membership to states such as France, Austria and Germany as well as in the public opinion of several other countries. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the pros and cons of the possible European enlargement towards Turkey, as well as the major implications for the EU if Turkey joins. These include the risks of absorbing a large agricultural state like Turkey, the economic consequences for the EU, the unstable domestic political situation, the violation of minority rights (e.g. Kurds and Armenians), the disputes over Cyprus, the fact that the country is situated on the fringes of Europe, and the overwhelming Muslim majority. The latter is probably the most delicate issue, which has revived the debate on the question of 'European identity' and on the 'limits of Europe'. On one side there are arguments that reflect the logical as well as emotional problems of annexing Turkey into the EU, while on the other side there are cases supporting the annexation. The support for Turkey's membership is seen as a way to strengthen the European Security and Defense Policy, as a guarantee for the stability in the Mediterranean and in the Middle Eastern region and as an opportunity to secure European provisions of energy through the establishment of pipelines that cross the Turkish territory. This positive and constructive European vision of Turkey is for some member states, such as the UK, the key for granting EU membership, even if the country won't be able to completely fulfill the Copenhagen Criteria on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These, however, are parameters that do not take into consideration whether Turkey is really European and whether it has the right to belong to the 'family of nations' just like the Central Eastern European countries do. If the EU measures the level of 'Europeaness' through factors like geography, culture and history, then one can state that Turkey is not really Europe. However, the EU cannot slam the door on Turkey now that the question of conflict between two civilizations is once again taking center stage in the world without facing repercussions.*

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## Map of the European Union



Source: CIA, Factbook (2007), 'European Union,' <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ee.html>.

## **Introduction**

The relations between Turkey and the European Union date back to 1959, when Turkey applied for Associate Membership in the European Economic Community (EEC), and on September 12, 1963 signed the “Ankara Agreement”. The scope of this Agreement, which came into effect on December 12, 1964, was to integrate Turkey into a customs union with the EEC, whilst acknowledging the final goal of membership. The abolition of tariffs and quotas on goods between Turkey and the EU was completed in 1995.

While these events seem purely based on an economic relationship with the EU, in reality they represent a springboard for Turkey to advance the proposal of formally joining the EU. In 1987, following a temporary halt in relations between Turkey and the EU as a result of the 1980 military coup, Ankara submitted its application for formal membership. The EEC, though, was not ready to negotiate enlargement with Turkey, due to the country’s economic and political situation, as well as its poor relations with Greece and the Cyprus conflict. The matter was, therefore, deferred to more favorable times. However, when the European Commission decided in 1997 to start accession talks with Central Eastern European Countries (CEECs) and Cyprus, the EU was pressured again by Ankara for the approval of a formal membership. In order to avoid Turkey’s disappointment at the EU’s decision to consider the annexation of eastern European countries and Cyprus and to mitigate Turkish resentments towards the EU, the European Commission decided to recognize Turkey as a candidate country in the Helsinki European Council of 1999 and to officially open negotiation talks on October 3, 2005.

The EU decision to officially welcome Turkey as a potential member has not been celebrated with much fanfare among some member states, whose support for Turkey's future entry into the EU has proved to be unenthusiastic. The reason for this mainly lies in the fact that Turkey straddles Europe and Asia, it borders politically unstable states like Iraq, Iran, Syria, Armenia and Georgia and it is populated by a Muslim majority, which demonstrates that it is not culturally European. In addition to this, there are a series of other factors that could have profound consequences on the future direction of the EU. One of these is the population of Turkey, which increases every year thanks to the high birth and low death rates. These demographic projections could negatively impact the EU, both for what concerns immigration flows into the member states, as well as the EU's voting system. Turkey, in fact, would have an equal or slightly bigger population than Germany and would eventually surpass it in the number of seats.

Turkey's unstable economy is another problem that could jeopardize the financial allocation of resources in the EU, especially concerning regional and agricultural funds. In fact, the immense extent of Turkey's rural areas and regional disparities would force the EU to reprogram its budget to accommodate Turkey's needs and to allow the country to catch up with more advanced European states. On top of this, Turkey's economy, despite the strong gains in 2002-2006, is still burdened by a high current account deficit, high debt and high unemployment rates.

These, however, are not the only concerns raised by those member states, like Austria, Germany and France, who strongly oppose Ankara's entry into the EU and who propose a "Privileged Partnership" instead of membership. There are also a series of

issues related to the lack of democracy, the lack of respect for human and minority rights (e.g. the Kurds), the Cyprus conflict, the economic embargo against Armenia and, of course, the cultural differences.

While these remain the main arguments of those who feel that Turkey is a step too far, geographically, politically and psychologically speaking, the proponents of Turkish membership see the situation in a less dramatic and complicated way. According to them, in fact, the accession of Turkey into the EU will have more advantages than disadvantages. First, it will help forge a bond between Western and Muslim worlds, easing the diplomatic strain and prejudices created after 9/11, as well as strengthening the integration of those Muslim communities already living in Europe and dispelling the myth that the EU is a “Christian club”. Second, it will give incentive to Turkey’s journey towards modernization under the auspices of the AKP ruling party and enhance the reform program already in place. EU aspirations are, in fact, the glue that binds together Turkey’s key groups, like the Muslim democrats, the secularists, the armed forces, and so on. If the EU decides to block negotiations, the secular army generals, who have already warned President Gul to moderate his Islamic tendencies, will have a strong reaction to this. They would probably execute another military coup and blame President Gul and his Prime Minister Erdogan for the radical reforms that have been introduced into the country. Third, Turkey’s entry into the EU is not expected for another decade, by which time the country will be much changed. In the next few years Turkey, hopefully, will have improved its relationships with Armenia, Cyprus and Greece. Problems with Greece have already been smoothed and the two countries’ rapprochement seems more a reality



now than it was just a few years ago. Fourth, Turkey's entry will also secure new energy corridors for the EU, allowing member states to be less dependent on Russian oil and gas supplies. The project of constructing new pipelines that are going to cross Turkey's territory will guarantee more European leverage on its energy policy. These arguments, according to the proponents of membership, should overcome European mistrust toward Turkey, which only damages European interests, as it has been demonstrated by the reduction of Turkey's contribution to Europe's Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP). Turkey's army is the second largest in NATO after the United States and its participation in the European Security Defense Policy (ESDP) could actually help strengthen EU security policy in the Mediterranean and Caucasian areas.

These issues demonstrate how the debates about Turkey's membership have created divergent opinions among member states' leaders, who will eventually have to unanimously agree for Turkish accession to be successful. However, even if those skeptical European politicians can overcome the problem that Turkey would change the nature of the EU in a political and economic way, they would not easily tolerate an overwhelming Muslim population in Europe. This, according to them, would undermine the European identity, which is not only founded on political principles, such as democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, but it is also based on historical and religious values that the Union needs in order to ensure coherence and to guide its actions in a meaningful way. Therefore, before thinking further about another enlargement, the European Union leaders should ask themselves where the EU borders lie and who can actually be considered "European".

This paper will first provide an insight into what the enlargement is and how it works. Second, it will analyze this in relation to Turkey and take into consideration the challenges that both Turkey and the EU will face if membership is granted. This essay will consider in detail the problems associated with Turkey's membership, such as the political, economic and religious factors, as well as the security, energy and diplomatic advantages of having Turkey within EU. The thesis will then discuss EU member states' reactions to Turkey's entry and the implications related to it, such as the question of EU identity, and the difference between Turkey and the CEECs' enlargement. It will conclude with a critical assessment about Turkey joining the EU, which will answer the following question: "Is Turkey part of Europe?"

## Chapter 1

### How Does a Country Join the EU?

#### The Enlargement Process

The process of enlargement, which is also referred to as 'European Integration', starts with a country submitting an application for membership to the European Council, which asks the European Commission to evaluate the applicant's ability to meet the conditions for membership. These, which are known as the *Copenhagen Criteria* and were established by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, include:

- The stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect and protection of minorities
- The existence of a functioning market economy and capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union
- The ability to take on the obligations of full membership, the so-called *acquis communautaire*: that is the new members must accept the objectives of the European Union, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union

- The capacity of the EU to absorb new member states, while maintaining the momentum of European integration, which indicates the fact that membership and incorporation must proceed only in line with the EU's ability to incorporate new member states.<sup>1</sup>

If the applicant country demonstrates the ability to meet the above criteria, if the Commission delivers a positive opinion and if the Council agrees to a negotiating mandate, then negotiations are formally open. Once the country has been granted candidate status, it will have to prepare for the accession process, through a pre-accession framework of procedures and strategies, which include: bilateral agreements between the European Union and the candidate country; Accession Partnership and National Programs for the Adoption of the *Acquis* (NPAA), which indicates the key priority areas in which the candidate country needs to make progress, as well as the required financial support; participation in the EU Programs, Agencies and Committees, which will allow the transfer of know-how to the candidate country and the opportunity to become familiar with EU practices; the pre-accession financial assistance to prepare the candidate country for accession; and, finally, the adoption of other instruments that would favor political dialogue between the candidate country and the EU member states.<sup>2</sup>

The second step in the pre-accession strategy is negotiation, which relates to the adoption and the implementation of the Community *acquis*, The Commission, through a

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Foreign Office, "The Copenhagen Criteria", *The Federal Foreign Office (Auswartiges Amt)*, <http://www.auswaertigesamt.de/diplo/en/Europa/Erweiterung/KopenhagenerKriterien.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Europa Glossary, "Accession Criteria (Copenhagen Criteria)," *Europa: Gateway to the European Union*, [http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession\\_criteria\\_copenhagen\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen_en.htm).

process called “screening”, monitors the candidate country’s compliance with the Copenhagen Criteria and reports its progress to the Council (Progress Report). The *acquis* gets divided into Chapters, and there are as many chapters as areas in which the progress must be made. Each Chapter is negotiated individually in bilateral intergovernmental conferences between the candidate country and the member states. During the negotiation process, a Chapter needs to be opened and closed before it can be incorporated into a draft Accession Treaty. Once the negotiations on all Chapters are concluded and incorporated into a draft Accession Treaty, the Commission and the European Parliament have to submit their opinion on the matter and sign the Treaty. After signature, the member states will have to unanimously agree and ratify the document. If this happens, then the candidate country becomes a Member State.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Case of Turkey**

Turkey’s first step towards the European Economic Community, which then became the European Union, occurred in 1963, when the country signed an Association Agreement, also known as the “Ankara Agreement”. This document laid down the basic objectives in their relations, such as the economic goals and the establishment of a customs union. Ankara’s application for the Association Agreement was mainly motivated by three factors. First, the fact that Greece had previously concluded an association agreement with the EEC raised Turkey’s fear of being left out of the game, of

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<sup>3</sup> European Commission, “How Does a Country Join the EU,” *European Commission*, [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement\\_process/accesion\\_process/how\\_does\\_a\\_country\\_join\\_the\\_eu/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement_process/accesion_process/how_does_a_country_join_the_eu/index_en.htm).

the economic advancement of her neighbor and of the fact that Greece could use leverage against Turkey to promote its interests, such as for the Cyprus and Aegean islands question. Second, the growing power of the Soviet Union raised some security concerns for Turkey. The country, haunted by the possible spread of Communism, saw the European Community as a potential ally against the Soviets. By the same token, Western Europeans also felt threatened by the advancement of the Soviet Union and they welcomed cooperation with Turkey, because it could actually help block Communist expansion towards southern Europe, as well as reinforce diplomatic action between East and West. Third, the obvious gains behind the Association Agreement related to the exports towards the Single Market, foreign economic aid, direct capital investments and the reduction of unemployment rate. For the EEC too, this was an important step, not only for the expansion of the Single Market, but also for ensuring that Turkey and Greece would be treated equally.<sup>4</sup>

Turkey's economic relations with the EU were seen by Ankara as a springboard for the advancement of the country's formal membership into the EU. On April 14, 1987, in fact, Turkey submitted its application for membership which was not taken into consideration due to the country's economic and political problems, as well as the disputes with Greece over Cyprus. Following the European Commission's accession talks with the CEECs and Cyprus, the EU was pressured again by Ankara for the approval of a formal membership. In 1998, the Commission adopted a document called

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<sup>4</sup> Harun Arikan, "The Characterization of the EU's Association Policy towards Turkey," in *Turkey and the EU: An Awkward Candidate for EU Membership?* Second edition (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 55.

“Communication on a European Strategy for Turkey,” which envisioned a pre-accession strategy, with the adoption of the *acquis communautaire*, the harmonization of European legislation and a closer economic cooperation between Turkey and the EU. Turkey’s progress as an applicant country was, however, very slow. There was still a lot to accomplish when Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate country in 1999 at the Helsinki European Council. Because of these and other related issues, such as lack of respect of human and minority rights, lack of democratic principles, and so on, the European Commission stressed that negotiations would not start until the political criteria had been met (the economic criteria were mostly met with the establishment of a customs union). The Strategy document provided a framework to encourage Turkey to promote reforms that would strengthen the political dialogue, with a particular focus on human rights issues; provide the country with a full participation in Community programs and agencies; harmonize the legislation with a full analysis and adoption of the *acquis*; and coordinate EU financial assistance. The progress envisaged in the 2002 Commission Report became reality with noticeable advancements in the Turkish legal system, the abolition of the death penalty, the adoption of important measures for authorizing languages other than Turkish in radio, television and education, and some economic improvement. These efforts show Turkey’s determination towards the implementation of the Copenhagen Criteria, even if it did not fully meet them. Substantial advancements in the political reform process were also seen in 2004, even if legislation, freedom of expression, minority rights and women’s rights still needed to be further consolidated. The positive steps taken by Ankara were recognized by the 2004 European Council,

during which it was decided to set the year 2005 as a date to open accession negotiations with Turkey.<sup>5</sup>

In October 2005, The European Commission began conducting an analytical examination or “screening” of the country’s *acquis*, which was formally completed in October 2006, and opened the negotiations on six Chapters of the *acquis*: Rights of Establishment and Freedom to provide Services, Company Law, Financial Services, Information Society and Media, Statistics and Financial Control.<sup>6</sup> Negotiations on these Chapters have not been closed yet, whereas only one Chapter of the *acquis*, ‘Science and Research’, has so far been officially opened and closed. For what concerns the other Chapters, there are 34 remaining to be examined and only a few have been opened but not yet closed. The reason behind this is the continued dispute over Cyprus, which prompted the EU to freeze talks on eight Chapters and to state that no other Chapters would be opened or closed until a resolution is found. In addition to this, the Chapters on ‘Statistics and Financial Control’, was blocked by French President Nicholas Sarkozy in June 2007.<sup>7</sup>

The obstacles encountered in the negotiations of the *acquis* Chapters between Turkey and the EU have proved that the country has still lot to accomplish in order to align its political system with the European one. The Turkish government, in order to become a member of the EU, is required to make progress in the following areas:

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<sup>5</sup> Commission of the European Communities, “Relations between the European Union and Turkey,” 2002 *Regular Report on Turkey’s Progress towards Accession* (SEC 2002 1412), [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key\\_documents/2002/tu\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key_documents/2002/tu_en.pdf), 9.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, “Candidate Countries: Turkey,” *European Commission*, [http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/fsj/enlargement/turkey/wai/fsj\\_enlarge\\_turkey\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/enlargement/turkey/wai/fsj_enlarge_turkey_en.htm).

<sup>7</sup> Dan Bilefsky, “Turkish Entry into Europe Slowed by Sarkozy Move,” *New York Times*, June 25, 2007, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/25/world/europe/25cnd-turkey.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/25/world/europe/25cnd-turkey.html?_r=1&oref=slogin).



- *Regulation of relationship between civil and military components of the society* – In June 2006, a new provision inserted in the Military Criminal Code established that no civilians will be tried in military courts, unless military personnel and civilians commit an offense together. This is only a small step taken in this regard, while little overall progress has been made in limiting military influence in the political realm.<sup>8</sup>
- *Judicial System* – The authorities have been focusing on the implementation of the new Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Law Enforcement Sentences. New circulars have been introduced by the Ministries of Interior and Justice in November 2005 to clarify legislation on arrest, detention and the prevention of human rights violations during these practices. However, a number of issues remain to be addressed. One of them is *Article 301* of the Penal Code, which provides imprisonment to whoever publicly denigrates “Turkishness”. The use of this Article has been abused to imprison mostly Kurds and Armenians. The most recent example is the case of the writer Orhan Pamuk, who was charged with violating the Turkish Constitution, after he spoke in an interview with a Swiss newspaper about how Turkey violated Kurds and Armenians’ rights.

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<sup>8</sup> Commission of the European Communities, “Civil-Military Relations.” *Turkey 2006 Progress Report* (SEC 2006 1390), [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2006/nov/tr\\_sec\\_1390\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2006/nov/tr_sec_1390_en.pdf), 7.

Although the national court dropped the charges against him, there is still a lot to be accomplished concerning freedom of expression.<sup>9</sup>

- *Human Rights, Cultural Rights and Protection of Minorities* – In 2004, Turkey decided to abolish the death penalty, which included the suspension of the sentence for the Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan, and to implement more cultural and minority rights. One of these is the permission for Kurds to broadcast in their language on two local TV channels in Diyarbakir, the south-eastern area of the country where the Kurdish majority lives. However, time restrictions apply and all broadcasts, with the exception of songs, must be subtitled or translated in Turkish. In addition, children whose mother tongue is not Turkish cannot learn their mother tongue in the Turkish public school system; they will have to be educated in private schools. Progress needs to be accomplished for the protection of freedom of expression and non violent statements, which have many times been condemned by the Turkish government with military action.<sup>10</sup>
- *Women's Rights* – EU concerns exist on the treatment of women, especially in the south eastern part of the country, where girls are mistreated and not registered at birth. This hampers the fight against forced marriage and crimes committed against them, since they cannot be properly traced. Recently, a campaign against

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<sup>9</sup> Wendy Weber, "Relations between the State and Civil Society in Turkey: Does the EU make a Difference?" in *Turkey and the European Union*, ed. Joseph S. Joseph (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 90.

<sup>10</sup> Commission of the European Communities, "Civil and Political Rights," 4-15.

domestic violence has been launched to stop discriminatory and violent practices but, even if the legal framework is overall satisfactory, implementation still remains a challenge.<sup>11</sup>

- *Cyprus* – Turkey’s continued refusal to open its ports and airports to traffic from Cyprus has led to a stall in the negotiations of the Chapters of the *acquis*. No progress so far has been made to normalize bilateral relations between Ankara and Nicosia. The reason behind this lies in the Turkish government’s fear of ending its support for the Turkish-Cypriot state and officially recognizing the Greek-Cypriot Republic.<sup>12</sup>
- *Participatory Democracy* - Turkey’s slow progress towards democratization limits the full political participation of civil society in the public life. An example is the restriction imposed on human rights organizations and on the freedom of association. The reason behind the limits of non-profits and political organization’s space of action is due to the development of a centralized state image, which was inherited from the Ottoman Empire. This vertical-hierarchical structure has been reflected by the Constitutional Court’s decision to close in 1995 the Islamist Refah Party (Welfare Party) and to ban several of its leaders,

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>12</sup> Civilitas Research, “Turkey Preparing for the Cyprus Train Wreck,” *Civilitas Research* (2006), [http://www.civilitasresearch.org/publications/view\\_article.cfm?article\\_id=66](http://www.civilitasresearch.org/publications/view_article.cfm?article_id=66).

including former Turkish Prime Minister Erbakan, from engaging in political activity for five years.<sup>13</sup>

### **Turkey, an Awkward Candidate for Membership**

The limitations in Turkey's reform progress and the violations of minority and cultural rights have raised a few doubts among European leaders, especially for those countries that oppose its membership. One of the logical questions they pose is: "Why has the EU considered Turkey as a candidate country, if it is politically and economically unstable, as well as culturally different?"

The main reason for the European Union to consider Turkish membership is the issue of security. This dates back to the Cold War era, when the fear of Communism and the growing power of the Soviet Union pushed Turkey to look at the EU as an ally and the EU to consider Turkey as a buffer zone to prevent the spread of Communism in south Eastern Europe. In fact, when Turkey joined NATO in 1952, it was the only country to share borders with the Balkan territories, the Caucasus and Central Asia and the Middle East, as well as to control important Straits. Turkey, with its strategic position, could have checked Soviet naval access to the Mediterranean and halted the expansion of Communism. Following the end of the Cold War, Turkey's geo-strategic importance did not diminish; it was seen as, on the contrary, more indispensable than ever for reducing regional instabilities in the Caucasus and the Middle East areas. During the Balkan crisis in 1990s, Turkey dispatched around 1200 personnel to the Stabilization Force in Bosnia

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<sup>13</sup> Arikan, "Characterization of Turkey's Political System," 119.

and Herzegovina (SFOR) and to the NATO operation in Kosovo (KFOR), participated in the Italian-led ALBA Operation in Albania, in the EU peace-keeping operations in the Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia (CONCORDIA), in Bosnia and Herzegovina (ALTHEA), and in the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUPM).<sup>14</sup> Without Turkey's support, the involvement of the EU in the Balkans would have been far more difficult. Turkey's strategic proximity to the area, its military contribution to the operations and the fact that it is a Muslim country that managed to reassure the Muslim populations in Bosnia and in Kosovo by remaining impartial, was seen as ideal for NATO and EU missions.

Turkey's importance was also re-affirmed in the first Gulf War in 1991, when Iraqi Dictator, Saddam Hussein, invaded Kuwait. Even if Turkey did not formally join the military coalition that fought against Iraq, it deployed its troops along the Turkish-Iraqi border and it authorized the United States aircraft to use the military air base at Incirlik for raids over Iraq. The decision of President Ozal to get involved in the situation was mainly due to the Kurdish issue. In fact, following the defeat of Saddam Hussein, Iraq's Kurdish minority rebelled against the local government and, when it began to persecute them, they fled towards Turkey's southern border. The Turkish government, though, decided to close the border and prevent the occurrence of a mass exodus for fear of having to deal, one day, with Kurdish militant nationalism and possibly an internal rebellion.

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<sup>14</sup> Eduard Soler i Lecha, "Turkey's Potential (and Controversial) Contribution to the Global 'Actorness' of the EU," in *Contentious Issues of Security and the Future of Turkey*, ed. Nursin A. Guney (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 33-50.

The Kurdish issue emerged again during the last Iraqi War when Ankara, fearful of the formation of an independent Kurdistan, decided not to get involved in the conflict and to deny access through its territory to US troops. By so doing, Turkey was avoiding addressing the potential problem of the formation of an independent Kurdistan, which could have triggered independence for those Kurds living in Turkey. The Kurdish problem, though, was not the only reason for Ankara to act in this fashion. The Turkish government was also preoccupied with its population's demonstration against the conflict, the other Arabic countries' reaction against the US invasion and the EU member states' judgmental attitude about the war. The divergent European opinions on the conflict provided Turkey with the opportunity to build common ground with states such as France and Germany, who strongly opposed the country's entry in the EU.

Even if Turkey's decision about not getting involved in the conflict helped improve relations with the EU, it caused a cooling in Turkey-US diplomacy and led Turkey to move away from the so-called *Atlanticist* agenda. This decision, however, did not alter the nature of the relationship between Turkey and the West. Turkey, in fact, continues to rely on its friendship with the US to strengthen its international role and for securing a place in the EU, given Washington's insistence on including Turkey. On the other side, the US relies on Turkey for its geo-strategic location and access to the Middle East, and for the fact that it is the only westernized country with an Islamic population majority. This continuous cooperation with the West is jeopardizing Turkish reputation in the Middle East, depicting the Turks as enemies of the Arabs more than friends.

However, despite these rumors, Turkey keeps playing the role of a faithful ally and, at the same time, tries to maintain good relations with Middle East regions.

The fact that the Middle East profoundly affects the EU with oil, terrorism, migration, narcotics, and so on, and that the EU lacks the means to tackle these issues, makes Turkey's alliance even more valuable and indispensable. An example is the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Since its establishment, Israel has refused to set its borders under the United Nations system and has constructed settlements at the expense of the Palestinians. This problem, according to some EU and US leaders, can be mediated with the help of Turkey, especially because the country has diplomatic ties with both sides and has earned the respect of the Arab world during the Iraq War.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, Turkey has good relationships with Syria and Iran. The most important reason in the improvement of diplomatic cooperation between the three is related to the Kurds' security issue. All three states are home to some Kurdish minorities and the American military presence in Iraq could help the Kurds form an independent Kurdistan and claim territories that are part of Syria, Iran and Turkey. Aside from this, rapprochement between Syria and Turkey comes also from well-established trade relations and Turkey's offer to build a water pipeline project to carry water from Turkey to Syria. Damascus' change of heart about political and economic cooperation with Turkey comes from the country's harsh warning of a potential war between the two, due to Syrian logistic and financial support of Ocalan and the PKK, throughout the 1970s, 1980s and the 1990s. Syria's fear of an attack, backed by US military, and of being

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<sup>15</sup> Sedat Laciner, "Turkey's EU Membership's Possible Impacts on the Middle East," *Assyrian International News Agency*, December 24, 2004, <http://www.aina.org/news/20041224152357.htm>, 3.

isolated from the West, pushed the state to take steps against terrorism and to decide that political, commercial and social ties were more beneficial to the country than supporting terrorism.<sup>16</sup>

Closer ties with Iran have also been developed in the past few years, thanks to a deal concluded between Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan and Iranian President Mohammad Ahmendinejad about the establishment of a joint company to carry up to 35 billion cubic meters of Iranian natural gas via Turkey to Europe and the construction of three thermal plants by Turkish companies in Iran. This agreement, which according to the US comes in a difficult time of nuclear problems, could actually boost Turkey's chances to join the EU. In fact, by being an energy corridor for the European Union, Turkey will help its people and European member states to be less dependant on Russian oil and gas supplies, given that Gazprom, the Russian gas company, is the major supplier of gas and oil resources for Turkey and the EU and it has just announced a price increase.<sup>17</sup>

The Turkish-Iranian pipeline is not, however, the only project envisaged by the Turkish government. Turkey is also engaged in the construction of the 'Nabucco' pipeline, originating from Azerbaijan, crossing Turkey's territory and ending in Austria, Germany or Italy. This project, which began this year and will end in 2010, will make possible the transportation of between 8 and 13 billion of cubic meters of gas per year, reaching 25-31 billion in 2020.<sup>18</sup> The implementation of this project will open for the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 10-13.

<sup>17</sup> "Too Energetic a Friendship." *The Economist*, 25-31 Aug. 2007, 49.

<sup>18</sup> Vladimir Socor, "Pipeline Project can Diversify Europe's Gas Supplies," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, (Volume 3, Number 127), June 30, 2006, [http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article\\_id=2371236](http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2371236).



first time a transit corridor for the Caspian gas into the EU territory, contribute to the diversification of EU' s suppliers and reducing Russian Gazprom monopoly on oil and gas resources. As a result of Turkish action, Russia announced a venture with the Italian company ENI to build a line across the Black Sea to Bulgaria.<sup>19</sup>

Turkish and Russian relations have always been conflicting due to the fact that these two countries are both rivals in the Black Sea area. The tensions between the two have been demonstrated during the Cold War, when Russia saw Turkey as a proxy for the US, as a strategic competitor in the Eurasia region, and in 1990s, when Russia and Turkey perceived themselves as competitors on a number of crucial issues, such as the Kurdish-Chechen one. In 1990, in fact, Moscow accused Ankara of supporting the Chechen cause, due to Turkey's close historic association with the Muslim peoples of the region and its permission for those Chechens living in Turkey to raise money to buy equipment for the fighters in Chechnya. Russian officials, in turn, allowed groups sympathetic to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to hold meetings in Moscow and it granted asylum to their leader, Abdullah Ocalan.<sup>20</sup>

These issues, though, were not the only causes of the political tensions which developed between Russia and Turkey. In fact, when Turkey began in 2002 the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline for the transportation of crude oil from Azerbaijan through Georgia to Turkey, Russia saw its hopes of becoming an essential energy supplier to Turkey evaporate. Despite this, however, the relations between the two

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<sup>19</sup> *The Economist*, 49.

<sup>20</sup> Gareth M. Winrow, "Turkey and the Greater Black Sea Region," in *Contentious Issues of Security and the Future of Turkey*, ed. Nursin A. Guney (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007).121-134.

countries experienced a rapprochement as a reaction to the US-led invasion of Iraq. The US policy in the Middle East, the fear that it could influence the Black Sea region and Turkey's refusal in March 2003 to allow US troops to use its territory as a launching pad for raids over Iraq, have drawn Russia and Turkey together. The two countries have found common ground over the Middle East, often sharing opposition about US policy in the region and their strong trade interests with Iran.<sup>21</sup> Turkey's commercial, social and cultural links with Russia and Middle Eastern countries have strengthened some politicians' view that Turkey's entry into the EU would actually help to improve European relations with these regions and arbitrate potential political misunderstandings.

Turkey's security importance and strategic position, however, have not been compatible with the creation of the ESDP. The fact that Turkey has always been part of European security through NATO, OSCE (Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe) and the Western European Union, and that now it has been partially excluded from it, not only has jeopardized EU-led operations but also the relations between the EU and Turkey. The adoption of the *Berlin Plus* Agreement in 2002, which allows the EU to draw on some of NATO's military assets when conducting peace-keeping operations, has given the ESDP a certain degree of independence from NATO. While Turkey enjoys an equal vote in NATO, it does not in the ESDP, because decisions are made only by EU members, even if it participates in EU-led operations using NATO assets. In addition, there is also the fear that Greece could act through the ESDP to influence the EU over the Cyprus' question and leave Turkey incapable of reacting. These are the main reasons why

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<sup>21</sup> Fiona Hill and Omer Taspinar, "Russia and Turkey in the Caucasus: Moving Together to Preserve the Status Quo?" *Ifri* (n.8, January 2006), [http://www.ifri.org/files/Russie/hilltaspinar\\_anglais.pdf](http://www.ifri.org/files/Russie/hilltaspinar_anglais.pdf), 4-19.

Turkey has opposed the creation of an autonomous ESDP outside of NATO's decision-making framework.<sup>22</sup> Turkey's participation in the ESDP is essential for the EU, because its exclusion from it can jeopardize EU-led operations, as well as EU-NATO relations. A recent example is the EU planned ESDP police projects in Afghanistan and Kosovo, which have been blocked by disputes between Greek-Cypriots and Turks over the framework of the mission. In fact, while Turkey maintains that its brigade should participate in the projects not as a supplementary but as the main contributor, Greek-Cypriots argue that this is not a NATO mission but rather a civilian one and that Turkey should not be there at all.<sup>23</sup>

These issues demonstrate how important it is to secure Turkey's integration into the ESDP and to ensure the country's entry into the EU. A simple 'Partnership' agreement with Ankara would not benefit the implementation of the European Security Defense Policy and it may have bitter consequences for a strategic dialogue between NATO and the EU. Firstly, Turkey is a NATO member and its approval of Common Foreign Security Policy would make it easier for the EU to establish better patterns for cooperation between NATO and the EU, allowing the EU to use NATO assets and capabilities if required. Secondly, Turkey's geographic position has a strategic value for the CFSP, because the country is a stabilizing actor in the region. Turkey's cooperation will help the EU to enhance its diplomatic relations and operations in the Middle East, the Balkans and in Eurasia, as well as reinforce Turkey's internal security, which is also

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<sup>22</sup> Arikan, "Security Aspects of the EU's Relations with Turkey," 197-226.

<sup>23</sup> International Crisis Group, "EU-Turkey Tensions Undermine Security Cooperation," in *Turkey and Europe: The Way Ahead*, International Crisis Group (Europe Report n. 184, August 17, 2007), [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/184\\_turkey\\_and\\_europe\\_the\\_way\\_ahead.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/184_turkey_and_europe_the_way_ahead.pdf), 5-7.

relevant to European security. Turkey may also be a good example and driving force for the promotion of democracy, rule of law and market economy in Central Asia and Middle East. Turkey, in fact, provides a valid model of a secular, democratic Muslim country, which has close relations with the West. This may influence many countries in the region to follow its pattern and to develop ties with European states. Turkey's candidate status to the EU has, in fact, already created positive response in the region, stimulating the interest of countries like Morocco and Armenia that have expressed a desire for coming closer to the EU as negotiations with Turkey move along.

The third aspect of Turkish contribution to CFSP is related to its military capability. As indicated in the Kosovo crisis, the EU was unable to deploy a European army, because it lacked the means to do so. Its use of NATO's military assets suggested the EU needs to rely on other sources in order to function. In this respect, Turkey has the second largest standing army in NATO after the US, with advanced military equipment and a total of 1,043,550 troops.<sup>24</sup> The strength of the Turkish Army has been employed during Joint Peace Support Actions with NATO for regional and global peace. Examples of these are: the 1993-1994 *Operation United Shield* responding to famine conditions in Somalia (UNOSOM); *Operation Sharp Guard* and *Operation Deny Flight* for Air Force patrol and escort missions over Bosnia between 1994-1995 and 1996-Present (UNPROFOR and IFOR/SFOR). In 2004 European Force (EUFOR) took over the responsibility of this mission from NATO, but Turkey continues to participate in this Operation with a mechanized Battalion Task Force formed of 844 military personnel in

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<sup>24</sup> Info.com, "Turkish Army", *Info.com*,  
[http://reference.info.com/reference?qkw=Turkish%20army&source\\_id=2222&source\\_key=Turkish+Army](http://reference.info.com/reference?qkw=Turkish%20army&source_id=2222&source_key=Turkish+Army).

Zenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina; *Operation ALBA* in Albania (1997), *KFOR* in Kosovo (1999-to present), and ISAF in Afghanistan (2003); *Operation Essential Harvest*, conducted to disarm the Albanian militants in Macedonia (2001); *Operation Continual Freedom* in Afghanistan between 2002-2003 and 2005-Present (ISAF). Turkey assumed the command of ISAF a couple of times in 2002 and 2005. Turkish Army is still carrying out its mission together with the international assistance force in Kabul. The Turkish army has also taken part in non-military operations, such as the 2006 Lebanon mission and Disaster Relief Operations providing support to Turkey after the 1999 earthquake, to the US after Katrina disaster in 2005, to Pakistan after the major earthquake in 2005, and to Darfur (Sudan) in order to stop the violence in 2005 (UNMIS). Lastly, the Turkish Army has been involved in observation and military consultation missions to support the UN in: Bosnia-Herzegovina (UNMIBH and IPTF), East Timor, Georgia (UNOMIG), Al-Khalil in the West Bank (TIPH), and Iraq-Kuwait.<sup>25</sup> The cooperation between the Turkish Army and its allies in these numerous actions has advanced the role of Turkey as an international actor, conferring the country a military status on par with the rest of the Western powers. The Turkish Army, however, is not only a potential force on the battlefield, but it is also a real force in day-to-day politics, as proven by the previous coups. The Turkish Army considers itself both the guarantor of domestic and international peace and the highest arbiter of the state, making sure that mere democratically elected governments do not stray from their duties.

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<sup>25</sup> Burak Sansal, "Turkish Army," *All About Turkey*, <http://www.allaboutturkey.com/army.htm>.

The role of Turkey as an influential actor in the sphere of international security and the potential risks associated with its exclusion from the ESDP must be sufficient to overcome member states' misperceptions and doubts of having Turkey as an active participant in European security. The ESDP, together with CFSP, is an area where Turkey and the EU should be committed to converge, simply because their strategic objectives of peace and stability in Europe and elsewhere, as well as their perception of security challenges and threat, are similar.

### **Instability between Greece and Turkey**

A further reason to consider Turkish membership is the instability between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus. The island, which lies less than 50 miles from Turkey's southern coast and 500 miles from the Greek mainland, has been a cause of tension since the 1950s, when the Greek inhabitants (80% of the total population) demanded union with their mother-land. Turkey never accepted Greek-Cypriots' claims for independence and when the Cyprus issue became serious, representatives of Greece, Turkey and Great Britain convened together to conclude the Zurich-London Agreements, which laid the foundations of the Republic of Cyprus. On the basis of these arrangements, the constitution of Cyprus established a Greek Cypriot president and a Turkish Cypriot vice-president. The political unity between the two factions was, however, very precarious. In 1963, the power-sharing government collapsed and a UN peacekeeping force was sent to mediate the conflict.

The situation continued to unravel and, in 1974, Turkey decided to act unilaterally by conducting a military intervention on the island. Two days later formal peace talks were convened in Geneva between Greece, Turkey and Britain. Cyprus was then split in two distinct communities, divided by the so-called ‘Green Line’: the Greek-Cypriots in the South and the Turkish-Cypriots in the North. These two factions have each developed a different understanding of sharing the island’s sovereignty. While the Turkish-Cypriots support the idea of a confederation with the political equality of the two Cypriot peoples, the Greek-Cypriots support a bi-zonal and bi-communal federal state with a single sovereignty and a single citizenship.<sup>26</sup>

In 2004 a United Nations proposal, the *Annan Plan*, was put forward in order to settle the Cyprus dispute and to form the United Cyprus Republic. The referendum, though, was boycotted by the Greek-Cypriots, dismantling the hopes of those who wanted the island united. On 1 May 2004, a week after the referendum, Cyprus joined the European Union but only the Greek part was annexed. The North part, which continues to see itself as the Turkish Republic of Cyprus (not recognized by any other state or country other than Turkey), is still under the watchful eye of the European Union.

Disputes over Cyprus have always dominated the political scenario of EU-Greece-Turkey relations, especially when Greece decided to join the EU. In fact, following Greece’s entry into the EU in 1981, Turkey became concerned about the country’s potential leverage on the EU decision-making power over its future

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<sup>26</sup> Directorate General of Press and Information, “Foreign Policy of Turkey,” *Office of the Prime Minister, Directorate General of Press and Information* (December 2002), <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/REFERENCES/Foreignpolicy2001.htm>.

membership and the outcome of the Cyprus question. In order to reassure Turkey, the EU prompted efforts to carry out its bilateral relations with Ankara and to reinforce its commitment to economic trade. However, after Greece joined, it became difficult for the EU to pursue the same previous balanced policy towards disputes between Greece and Turkey. This time, Greece was a member of the EU with a veto power and decision-making weight. Greece, in fact, tried to place obstacles in EU-Turkey relations by imposing conditions for Turkey's membership and vetoing the customs union agreement. Given that Greece's entry and, subsequently Cyprus' entry into the EU, affected negatively on EU-Turkey relations, the EU then sought to reactivate them by upgrading Turkey's status from applicant state to candidate state. The EU decision was mostly an attempt to re-gain Turkey's confidence, because the cost of its exclusion was high in security, political and economic terms. In addition, with the prospect of a future membership, Turkey feels more motivated in engaging in cooperation with Greece, especially on the Cyprus issue. In fact, if progress continues to be made in this field, Turkey can carry out the negotiations of the *acquis* Chapters. By the same token Greece, especially after the death of its Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu in 1996 and the election of Costas Simitis, a more moderate politician, began to realize that the normalization of relations with Turkey would actually help guaranteeing EU security. Further factors leading to the countries' rapprochement are the fact that Greece wants to improve its image in the eyes of the EU by moving away from its past, such as the Ocalan's scandal, and extending a hand towards its old enemy. This scandal occurred when Greece shielded and contributed to the protection of Ocalan, the PKK leader, while



cooperating with his guerrillas. When Ocalan was captured with the help of the US, Greece was covered in scandal before the international community.<sup>27</sup> In order to mend the fences with Turkey and the EU, Greece decided to begin cooperating with its neighbor. The first signs of a rapprochement between the two countries were shown by the 1999 earthquakes in Turkey and Greece. During this time, aid, support and volunteers were exchanged by the two countries for rescuing purposes. Following the tragedy of the quakes, official visits of Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers to Ankara and Athens respectively resulted in the signing of a number of bilateral agreements in trade, commerce, the environment, tourism, culture and multilateral cooperation with regard to legal immigration, drug trafficking and terrorism.<sup>28</sup> Yet, it seems doubtful that the successful cooperation between the two in ‘soft’ politics could actually boost cooperation in ‘high’ politics issues, such as the Cyprus dispute. The parties, in fact, have not yet been able to reach an agreement on the solution of this problem. However, their reinforced bilateral relations are an essential platform to launch a solid dialogue for a lasting peace. This stability in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean can especially be helped by Turkey’s full membership. As long as Turkey is kept out of the EU and Greece enjoys the unilateral advantage of being an EU member, there is little hope to resolve the differences between the two countries.

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<sup>27</sup> Stephen Kinzer, “Aegean Dawn” in *Crescent&Star: Turkey Between Two Worlds* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 201-216.

<sup>28</sup> Arikan, “The Greek Factor: The Ultimate Obstacle to Turkish Membership?” 186-194.

## Chapter 2

### Turkey and Europe

#### Turkey's Historical Background

Turkey has always been seen by the European Union as an awkward candidate for membership. The main reason behind this is that it straddles the divide between Europe and Asia and has a Muslim population majority, which has led to an unclear definition of its political and social pattern, as well as to uncertainty for European politicians about its 'true' belonging. However, despite the doubts within the European Community, Turkey feels that its place is in Europe and that it deserves to be considered on a par with other European countries. A logical explanation for this can be found in its historical background following the First World War. During this period, Turkey joined the allied powers (France, Great Britain and Russia), while cultivating a secret alliance with Germany to contend Russian expansionism.<sup>29</sup> The defeat of the Axis of Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary) brought about the armistice of Mudros on October 30, 1918, which imposed the occupation of Turkish areas of strategic importance by the Allies. It was during these years that the effects of westernization of the Turkish society became even more evident, through a group of intellectuals known as the "Young Turks," who began using words such as "Constitution" and "Parliament". In 1920, the Turkish Grand National Assembly was founded in Ankara in the midst of the Turkish War of

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<sup>29</sup> Helen Chapin Metz, "World War I" in *Turkey: A Country Study*, second ed. (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1995), <http://countrystudies.us/turkey/12.htm>.

Independence with the aim of establishing a republic and overthrowing the Ottoman Sultan and his government in Istanbul. In 1922, the Sultanate was abolished and the following year the Republic of Turkey was proclaimed under Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. The latter was a successful military commander, who enacted a series of reforms that transformed Turkey into a modern nation.

As a president of the National Republic for fifteen years, Ataturk decided that the Grand National Assembly should be a unicameral parliament, governed only by one party, his own Republican People's Party. The reason for this was the fact that rapid modernization could only be assured by eliminating destructive political opposition. During these years, Ataturk promoted *nationalism*, a *populist program*, which encouraged mass adult education, and *secularism*. The latter is of particular importance to the formation of modern Turkey because it weakened the Islamic influence, by replacing religious institutions with modern ones (including a justice system), it substituted the Ottoman Arabic characters with the Latin alphabet, it promoted equality among citizens, and it led to the emancipation of women, who could wear modern western clothing.<sup>30</sup>

Ataturk's launch of Turkey's modernization was based on his decision to copy Europeans in order to catch up with them. This could be achieved only by dismantling the roots of the Islamic state and establishing a strong secular ideology, which included the replacement of the Ottomans' mix of common and Islamic law with the Swiss civil code, the Italian penal code and the German commercial code. Ataturk also abolished all Muslim brotherhoods, enhanced European values of democracy, rule of law and respect

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<sup>30</sup> Turizm.net, "Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey, *Turizm.net*, <http://www.turizm.net/turkey/history/ataturk.html>.

for human rights, made public the consumption of alcohol, and moved the country's capital from Istanbul to Ankara.

When he died in 1938, he left the Turks with a heritage of European values and the desire to carry out his political project of a secular state. In order to strengthen the foundations of modern Turkey, the government that succeeded Atatürk decided to speed up the engagement with Europe and the West. The occasion that led to this was the outbreak of the Cold War. After staying neutral for almost all of the Second World War, Turkey came under pressure from the Soviet Union in 1946 and turned to the West for help. The US stepped in with its economic support (*Truman Doctrine*) and as response to this generous gesture, Turkey sent troops to fight with the West in Korea and became, in 1952, a NATO member, ensuring European security against the influence of Communism and the establishment of the Warsaw Pact.

From 1959 onward, the history of Turkey becomes closely intertwined with that of the European Economic Community, which then became the European Union. From the signing of the 'Ankara Agreement' in 1963 to the recognition of Turkey as a candidate country in 1999, the implementation of domestic social, legal and economic reforms, clearly illustrate the country's desire to become a European Union member state and to be considered 'European'.

## **Turkey's Politics**

Turkey's recent history is not the only reason to consider the country as linked to Europe. Its politics and reforms too, such as the establishment of a multi-party system in 1945, have shown consistency with European political alignments and standards.

Political modernization in Turkey began in 2002 with the election of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan from the Justice and Development Party (34.3% of the national vote). Despite its religious inclinations, this conservative Party proved to be very pro-Western thanks to Erdogan's decision to break with the past Islamic political views of his predecessor, Necmettin Erbakan, leader of the Welfare Party, and to embrace a series of reforms that helped Turkey come closer to the European Union. Under Erdogan's leadership, Turkey began witnessing the promotion of new rights for the Kurdish minority and an improvement in the relations with Greece. In May 2004, Erdogan became the first Prime Minister to visit Greece since 1988 and secured the Greek support for Turkey's accession in the European Union.

The popularity of Erdogan's Party, though high, is not uniform across all of Turkey, as seen during the new presidential election that took place in July 2007. The huge rallies and protests that have marked the recent election and the military's threat to intervene in the political realm to restore order were due to Erdogan's decision to nominate his Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul, to replace President Ahmet Necdet Sezer. Like Erdogan, Mr. Gul is from the AKP party, which is known for having Islamic tendencies. However, despite the protests, Gul managed to secure 339 votes in the 530

seat parliament, thanks to the achievements in the last five years of the AKP Party, such as unprecedented economic prosperity and modernization.<sup>31</sup>

Gul's elections have also been welcomed by the European Union, whose officials see the AKP party as a platform for launching further economic and political reforms and Gul as the president who will give a positive impetus to Turkey's entry talks. Gul, when he was Turkey's Foreign Minister, worked closely with the EU leaders to allow his country to become a candidate for the EU and he opened membership negotiations with EU foreign ministers in October 2005. His progress in the Turkey-EU talks came to a standstill last year, when EU leaders decided to suspend negotiations in protest of Ankara's refusal to open its ports to trade with Greek-Cypriots. However, EU officials' concern now is not about Gul, who is seen as a reformer and who can help overcome the negotiations' impasse, but is rather focused on the Turkish military. These, who are the guarantors of the secularist ideology and have ousted four governments since 1960, see Gul's presidency as putting Turkey's secular state at risk and, therefore, they threatened to intervene. The military's opposition to Gul's nomination is not their only concern. They also fear Turkey's entry into the European Union, which will mean: trimming the influence of the army; reducing the powers of the National Security Council, the advisory organ where the generals coordinate policy on national security issues with government authorities; reforming the 1982 Constitution, which was

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<sup>31</sup> "A battle for the future," *The Economist*, June 19, 2007, [http://www.economist.com/world/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=9507270](http://www.economist.com/world/displaystory.cfm?story_id=9507270).

established during the military junta of 1980-1983; and, forbidding the trials of civilians in military courts, unless military and civilian personnel are both involved.<sup>32</sup>

### **Turkey's Economy**

The basis for Turkey's European aspirations can be seen in the country's economic developments since the establishment of the customs union. This, which sought to integrate Turkey into the European Economic Community's Single Market, has opened up Turkey's economy under President Turgut Ozal in 1980 and has generated a transition from agriculture sector to private industry. Despite the diversification of the economy, which has allowed Turkey to compete for global services and to increase its textile and automotive production, it remains a country fundamentally based on agriculture. About half of Turkey's area of some 79 million hectares is devoted to agriculture and this sector accounts more than 35% of employment.<sup>33</sup> The climatic conditions of Turkey have allowed the development of different produce, such as cereals, cotton, tobacco, fruit and vegetables, nuts, goat meat, and so on. These are cultivated in arable agricultural areas, which are mostly family-owned.

The establishments of the customs union and the pre-accession negotiations between Turkey and the EU have led to an increase in agricultural productivity, in order to compete within the EU Single Market, as well as to the development of the private sector (i.e. industry, banking, transport and communications) with less state control.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., [http://www.economist.com/world/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=9507270](http://www.economist.com/world/displaystory.cfm?story_id=9507270).

<sup>33</sup> CIA, "Economy: Turkey," *The World Factbook*, October 4, 2007, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html#Econ>.

In the 1990s, Turkey's economy was affected by a series of weak policies put into place by coalition governments, which led to high inflation and bankruptcy in 2001. Turkey's economic downturn, which witnessed high rates of unemployment and 40% loss in the currency's value, was quickly compensated by a strong economic recovery, marked by good monetary policies, structural reforms and IMF financial loans. Following these efforts to stabilize the country's internal situation, the economy grew an average of 7.5% per year from 2002 through 2006; the GDP growth reached 9%, followed by roughly 5% annual growth from 2005-07; inflation fell to 7.7% in 2005, but climbed back up to 9.8% in 2006.<sup>34</sup>

This economic growth, combined with the prospect of becoming a European member state in 2015, has led to the increase in direct foreign investment in 2006, which amounted to \$18.9 billion and it is expected to rise with the ongoing negotiation process and the establishment of the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which will bring up to 1 million barrels per day from the Caspian to market. Progress has also been made in the decline of the government debt, in the stabilization of the currency and in the increase of confidence in the economy for business and consumers. Despite these strong gains, Turkey still has a high deficit (\$2.9 billion) and unemployment rates (10.2%), which can be overcome by further economic reforms. These have been beneficial to the country, because they have tightened Turkey's economy towards the European Single Market. This process of integration will deepen further once Turkey joins the EU, through the removal of tariffs in areas not currently covered by the customs union, such as

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<sup>34</sup> Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, "Economy: Turkey," *US Department of State*, September 2007, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3432.htm#econ>.



agriculture. Imports and exports will also double, especially concerning automotives, textile and agricultural goods, where some restrictions still apply. Turkey's full inclusion into the EU will generate demand from member states, leading to an increase in the country's productivity, a fall in prices and higher demand for labor force to work in the services industry. These effects may, in turn, lead to a significant increase in the country's GDP.

### **Turkey's International Relations**

Turkish foreign policy, aside from WWI, has always been directed towards the establishment of good relations and cooperation with the West. This was reflected in the Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's idea of being on a par with Western powers' civilization, by advocating modernity at home and friendly policies abroad.

Following the defeat in WWI inflicted by the Triple Entente (France, Great Britain and Russia), the focus of the Republic of Turkey was on internal structuring and on resolving the problems left over from the Lausanne negotiations with the traditional allies, including the border issue. The cooperation with border countries was particularly intense, especially in the 1930s, when the international environment began to deteriorate again. Turkey played a leading role in 1934 in the establishment of the *Balkan Entente* (Turkey, Greece, Romania, and Yugoslavia) and the *Saadabad Pact* (Turkey, Iran, Iraq,

and Afghanistan). The aim of these Treaties was to guarantee security at home and to strengthen its position on the international stage.<sup>35</sup>

Before the start of WWII, Turkey signed non-aggression treaties with both the Axis and the Ally Powers, but then joined the war to occupy a place in the world order. Siding with the allies enabled Turkey to become one of the founding members of the United Nations' Charter in 1945 and to acquire prestige in the European sphere. Turkey, in fact, following the signing of the Charter, tried to project its role internationally, by joining different Western organizations. In 1949 Turkey joined the Council of Europe; in 1952, the country became a member of NATO; and, in 1963, it became an Associate Member of the European Economic Community.

During the Cold War, Turkey, just like Italy, played a bipartisan role in the dialogue between the Soviet Union and the West but, unlike Italy, it did not give Communism any room to maneuver. Once the totalitarian regimes collapsed in the 1990s, Turkey successfully managed to lay the foundations for strong economic and political ties with Eastern countries. The most important achievements in this field were the *Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization* and the participation in the peace-keeping and peace enforcement operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, Georgia and Somalia. Moreover, Turkey assumed the command of the *International Security and Assistance Force* in Afghanistan in 2002 and contributed 1400 troops to the mission.

Given the increase of Turkey's geopolitical significance especially after the Cold War, the country has adopted multidimensional foreign policy choices. In this context,

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<sup>35</sup> Directorate General of Press and Information,  
<http://www.byegm.gov.tr/REFERENCES/Foreignpolicy2001.htm>.

the primary objectives of Turkish foreign policy were to establish and develop friendly relations with all neighboring countries and to contribute to regional peace and stability. One of these regions is the Balkans. Important ties exist between the people of Turkey and those from the Balkan countries, as originally demonstrated by the creation of a *Balkan Entente* and through several major initiatives lunched by Turkey. Among these is the *Southeastern European Cooperation Process* (1996), the *Multinational Peacekeeping Force for Southern Europe*, participation in the NATO operations of 1999 and in the *EU Stability Pact* of 1997.<sup>36</sup>

Similar to the Balkans, the Caucasus is also a vital focus for neighboring relations. The Armenian occupation of parts of Azerbaijan (the region of Nagorno-Karabakh) in 1992 is a source of concern for Turkey. The country is currently supporting negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE/Minsk Group, which fosters peace in the area. Unfortunately, the attempts to broker stability have been unsuccessful, calling even more for a Turkish mediation role into the conflict. However, Turkey's refusal to re-open the Armenian-Turkish border and to recognize the Turkish genocide of the Armenian population in 1915 is making things more difficult. Aside from trying to cooperate in the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict, Turkey is also supporting a peace resolution in Georgia for the Abkhazian-Georgian conflict, which began in 1991.<sup>37</sup>

Turkey has also developed strong economic and political ties with Russia, the Middle East and the US. For what concerns Russia, the break-up of the Soviet Union and

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/REFERENCES/Foreignpolicy2001.htm>.

<sup>37</sup> Lionel Beehner, "Nagorno-Karabakh: The Crisis in the Caucasus," *Council on Foreign Relations*, November 3, 2005, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9148/nagornokarabakh.html>.

the emergence of the Russian Federation marked a new phase in Turkish-Russian relations. Both countries have stated the aim of working together toward the enhancement of peace, stability and economic well-being in the region. An example of bilateral cooperation is the *Blue Stream* pipeline, a major trans-Black Sea gas pipeline that carries natural gas from Russia into Turkey. On par with Russia, the Middle East possesses resources and trade which are constantly threatened by conflicts and turmoil. Turkey actively contributes to the Middle East's Peace Process between Palestine and Israel and it participates in the *Temporary International Presence* in Hebron. The latter comprises groups of civilians drawn from Denmark, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey, who are tasked with observing the situation in the West Bank city of Hebron. In addition to being a mediator in conflicts, Turkey has developed trade and economic ties with the Middle East countries and it is planning to deepen them with the construction of gas, oil and water pipelines. The latter is increasingly becoming a key strategic issue in the Middle East, and with Turkey's accession to the EU there are hopes for international management of water resources and infrastructures (e.g., dams, irrigation schemes, etc.).

Turkey is also engaged in an alliance with the US, which became more pronounced during the Cold War, particularly following the *Truman Doctrine* and Turkey's NATO membership. In the post-Cold War environment, Turkey and the US elevated their cooperation to the level of "strategic partnership", essential for maintenance of peace, stability, prosperity and democracy. The relationship between the two came to a stand-still during the Iraqi War in 2003, when Turkey decided to be less 'US-dependent' and more 'EU-oriented' in its decision-making process. Despite the cool-

down in US-Turkey relations, the two countries still share the idea of stability and democracy in the Middle East and the commitment to the fight against terrorism. Following the 9/11 attacks, Turkey was among the very first to join the global coalition that had been mobilized. In 2001, the country stressed the importance of defeating terrorism through common actions. This is the reason why the Turkish government hosted a joint Forum in Istanbul between the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the EU in 2002.

Turkey's achievements during the past years have propelled the country toward a broader international role. The contribution of Turkey in helping Western powers has strengthened its position among world leaders and has helped shape its foreign policy vision for the future. There are two major objectives for Turkey. The first goal is to complete the integration with the European Union. The claims for a full membership derive from the fact that Turkey feels geographically, historically, and economically part of the West more than the East and, therefore, European. The second, but equally important goal is to become a prosperous country on par with European states, and to be the leading power in its region.

### **Turkey's Political and Strategic Culture**

Turkey's vocation towards 'Europeanization' can be seen through the establishment of Ataturk's secular state, based upon the exclusion of religion from political affairs, which is a precondition for progress. This has allowed the country to catch up with the rest of Europe and to feel more Western than Asian. Signs of

modernization are visible in the political institutions, where a substantial portion of the governing stratum, especially military officers and high-ranking members, has received a secular education in their youth. Their values, knowledge, and view points, which reflected Ataturk's identification of "civilization" with the culture of Europe, separated them sharply from the illiterate, religious observant and socially traditional masses. Modernity can also be identified in every day life, from women's clothing to economic standards, including the country's technological development.

These achievements have increased, following the EU officials' recognition of Turkey as a candidate country. As the prospect of Turkey's entry into the EU becomes more concrete, the government is encouraging a series of radical reforms that are allowing the country to become even more modern, in conformity with European parameters. Thanks to these efforts, the fault line dividing 'Secularists' and 'Islamists' has considerably softened in the past few years. The Islamists have been forced to "adapt" to an increasing modern country and to put aside their ideological beliefs.

Turkey's willingness to undertake further steps towards modernization is meant to continue, as long as the promise of EU accession lies at the horizon. If, for any reason, this hope is taken away by those states that are skeptical about Turkey's ability to become a European member state, Turkey's reform process will undoubtedly slow down and give room of maneuver to those forces who oppose the EU, such as the military. These, together with those segments of society that see Turkey's EU membership as a huge imposition on the country with little benefits, will find a way to increase their influence on the government's decision-making process and re-gain their political power, which

has recently been cut back. In addition, the exclusion of Turkey from the EU game will be detrimental not only for the social and economic relations between Turkey and the EU, but also between the EU and the Middle East. Saying 'no' to a Muslim country like Turkey that has done so much to align itself with the rest of Europe, will confirm the Muslim opinion that the EU is strictly a "Christian Club" and that there is a dividing line between East and West.

## Chapter 3

### The EU and the Turkish Dilemma

#### Support and Opposition to Turkish Membership

The question of Turkish membership in the EU has increasingly become the focal point of European political debates, which discuss the potential impact on the EU of the country's major issues, such as demography, geography, cultural identity and politics. These are the main concerns for EU member states and have led to sharp divisions among EU leaders after Brussels' decision to proceed to the start of the negotiations.

The variety of opinions about European integration and enlargement shows that the issue of Turkish membership holds a different political meaning for all its members. For example, for those countries with an *Atlanticist* vision like the UK, the EU is merely a means to promote liberal and pro-market policies. This perception of the EU, together with the fact that London sees European security as strictly linked with NATO has made Great Britain favorably disposed towards Turkey's accession. Contrary to London's positive attitude about further European enlargement, countries like France, Germany and Austria appear more skeptical about Turkey's role in Europe and more concerned with the advancement of a European political agenda. Their opposition, therefore, is based on ideological (Islam), social (e.g., the role of the military) and demographic (e.g., migration and unemployment) factors, which are perceived to be fundamentally disruptive for Europe's identity and internal political balance. Because of their concerns about Turkey as a potential EU member state, they propose a 'Privileged Partnership', rather than a full



membership. This will give Turkey a special status in terms of economic partnership with the EU, given that both Ankara and the member states have mutual trade and commercial interests, but it rules out the question of membership. Reservations about this issue seem to recall the French skepticism about the European Constitution in the 2005 referendum, which brought to the front line the French public's concerns about the political role of the EU.<sup>38</sup>

Opposition to Turkey's entry has also been shown by new member states like Poland, which worries about the massive subsidies and funds that Turkey would draw once it becomes a member of the EU. Less concerned about Turkey's entry is Greece, Turkey's traditional enemy. Contrary to what one may expect, Athens' politicians have become supporters of the Turkish cause, because they believe that if Turkey joins the EU, it will be obliged to observe its rules and values. This, in turn, would facilitate Greeks' interests over disputed issues, such as Cyprus and the Aegean islands.

The following section analyzes the political and economic consequences of Turkish membership in the EU, as well as the critics that perceive Turkey as too big, too poor, or insufficiently 'European' to be part of the European Union.

### **Demographic Problem**

The first argument that opposes Turkey's membership is related to the country's large population and low death rate. Today, Turkey has a population of roughly 72 million people which, according to statistics, is supposed to grow. In 2015, the year for

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<sup>38</sup> EurActiv, "EU-Turkey Relations," *EurActiv.com*, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/eu-turkey-relations/article-129678>.

potential annexation of Turkey to the EU, the country will have a population of 82.1 million, slightly smaller than Germany at 82.4 million. By 2025, Turkey's population will be at 87 million and up to 97 million by 2050.<sup>39</sup> The high population rate will have an impact on the EU voting system, which gives voting weights to countries based on their population. If Turkey joins, it will be among the five large countries of the EU along side Germany, France, Italy, and the UK. This prospect frightens small countries, which are worried about being marginalized in the decision-making process by the bigger members. Their fears, though, have been reduced by the proposal of a 'double-majority' system in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. This means that the Union decisions will need a majority of both countries and population (55% and 65% respectively) to pass, which implies the support of at least 15 member states. In such a system, no single state can dominate. To block a decision, a minimum of four states is required. In the current system of a Qualified Majority Voting (QMV), instead, the threshold setting is somewhat different. To pass a vote by QMV, the proposal must be supported by 258 votes from a total of 345 - about 74% of the votes; the proposal must be backed by a majority of member states; the countries supporting the proposal must represent at least 62% of the total EU population. Whereas in the current system, the most populated countries have more weight in the decision process, in a future reformed double-majority

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<sup>39</sup> Kirsty Hughes, "Size: Is Turkey Too Big?" in *Turkey and the European Union: Just Another Enlargement?* A Friends of Europe working paper, June 17, 2004, <http://www.friendsofeurope.org/Portals/6/Documents/Reports/Turkey%20and%20the%20European%20Union%20-%20Working%20Paper%20%20FoE.pdf>, 8-10.

system countries like Turkey and Germany, which each account for 14.5% of the vote, will be unable to exercise influence by themselves.<sup>40</sup>

Turkey's population impact will have a significant influence in the European Parliament's seating system, even if Turkey will be unable to dominate all by itself. The current number of seats in the Parliament is set at 785, following the entry of Bulgaria and Romania. There is, however, a debate in Parliament which will limit the number of seats back down to 732. If the Union decides to implement this plan, all countries' allocations will have to be reduced. The result will be that Germany and Turkey would have the highest number of seats, 82, and the biggest share of the vote, 11.2% each.

### **Immigration and Unemployment**

Turkey's population migration and unemployment are of particular concern for EU member states, especially for countries like France, which has to deal with migration flows from Northern Africa and for Germany, which is already hosting 2.5 million people of Turkish origin. Although Turkish migration levels will mostly depend on the employment opportunities in Turkey and in the EU member states in 2015, they would negatively impact on the EU. First, Turkey's progress in the labor market by 2015 would be marginal, given the existing divide between rural and urban regions, the high proportion of its labor force employed in the agricultural sector and the current high unemployment rates (10.6%). These factors are already causing a substantial migration from poor rural to wealthier urban areas, as well as the inability of large cities like

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<sup>40</sup> Answers.com, "Qualified Majority Voting," *Answers.com*, <http://www.answers.com/topic/qualified-majority-voting>.

Ankara and Istanbul to absorb further high level of migration. Once Turkey joins the EU, unskilled rural migrants may look to neighboring states' labor markets as an alternative to the limited Turkish cities' employment opportunities. Second, with the rise of education levels, the country is experiencing an increase in the young skilled section of the population. This may suggest that migration flows following Turkey's entry into the EU may concern young skilled Turks, who would enter the EU' s labor markets and reduce the problem of aging workforce. This, however, would be detrimental for the current young EU member states' population. They would be dealing with a massive job competition and high unemployment rates, as is already happening following the EU' s accession of 10 Central Eastern European Countries in 2004 (The EU has a current unemployment rate of 7.1 %). Third, Turkey's entry into the EU will guarantee the country's population full freedom of movement rights. According to an EU study, it has been estimated that between 500,000 and 4.4. million Turks may migrate towards EU nations between 2015 and 2030.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Financial Impact of Turkish Accession on the EU**

Turkey is one the largest and poorest countries by EU standards. Concerns have been expressed about the financial costs of Turkish accession, especially for what concerns its agricultural sector. This, together with the population size, makes Turkey comparable to the 10 member states that entered the EU in 2004. With regard to the role

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<sup>41</sup> Migration News, "Turkey, Spain, Italy," *Migration News* (Vol.14 n.4, October 2007), [http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=3227\\_0\\_4\\_0](http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=3227_0_4_0) and Eurostat, "Euro Area and EU-27 Unemployment down to 7.1%," *Euro Indicators News Release*, April 2007, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP\\_PRD\\_CAT\\_PREREL/PGE\\_CAT\\_PREREL\\_YEAR\\_2007/PGE\\_CAT\\_PREREL\\_YEAR\\_2007\\_MONTH\\_06/3-01062007-EN-CP.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP_PRD_CAT_PREREL/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2007/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2007_MONTH_06/3-01062007-EN-CP.PDF).

of the agricultural sector in the economy and of per capita income, Turkey's agricultural share of GDP and employment are close to that of Romania and Bulgaria. For example, Turkey's agricultural share in total GDP is 11.1%, whereas Bulgaria and Romania are equal to 11.5%. Similarly, Turkey has a share of employment in agriculture of 34.4%, whereas Romania and Bulgaria have 32.3%.<sup>42</sup> This data illustrates that Turkey's agricultural sector is slightly bigger than those in Bulgaria and Romania, which means not only more competition in the EU if Turkey joins, but also less financial assistance for those countries that largely depend upon subsistence farming.

Turkey, in order to generate domestic employment and income to be on par with EU member states, will require the EU to apply the same criteria that were reserved for the member states that recently joined the European Union, which include the subsidies from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the structural funds. The latter consists of programs used to assist countries to reconstruct their economies, as well as to diminish national disparities between rural and urban areas. As did Romania and Bulgaria, Turkey will benefit of the structural funds' payments, which have been set at a maximum limit of 4% of a country's GDP.<sup>43</sup>

Based on this data, Turkey would become a significant net recipient in the EU, because of high transfer under the EU structural and agricultural policies and it would be a low contributor to the EU budget, due to its low GDP per capita. Turkey, however, is not yet a member of the EU. In the years before accession, Turkey's agriculture may yet

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<sup>42</sup> Herald Grethe, "Turkey's Accession to the EU: What will the Common Agricultural Policy Cost?" *Econturk*, 2005, [http://www.econturk.org/Turkischeconomy/greece\\_turkey.pdf](http://www.econturk.org/Turkischeconomy/greece_turkey.pdf), 128-130.

<sup>43</sup> Kirsty Hughes, "The Budgetary Impact of Turkish Accession," 18-22.

change, as well as the agricultural policies implemented by the EU. A first shift has been witnessed in the budget planned by Brussels' officials for the next few years, which shows a higher spending on growth and employment policies, rather than in the agricultural policy, which has always accounted for nearly 61% of the EU' s expenses.<sup>44</sup> Despite these changes, though, Turkey in 2015 will still be a poor country, with high unemployment rates, great regional disparities and a large agricultural sector. These issues will put on the EU a huge financial burden for Turkey's rural policy. It has been estimated, in fact, that the net transfer under the CAP to Turkey would be about € 1.7 billion in 2015 and could increase in the years to come.<sup>45</sup>

### **Turkey and the EU's Cultural Identity**

The question of European identity is the most sensitive among all arguments. The idea behind the definition of identity is to give the EU a common set of values to ensure its coherence and to guide its actions in a meaningful way. So far, these values have been defined politically by the Treaty on the European Union in 1992, which states that the EU is founded "on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law" (Article 6 TUE).<sup>46</sup>

As the EU began accepting more countries, two questions were analyzed: the meaning of a European identity and the identification of EU borders. The debates on the issue of identity have brought to the fore the definition of 'common heritage' of the EU.

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<sup>44</sup> European Commission, "Proposed Budget 2008: Growth and Employment at the Heart of EU Spending," *European Commission*, [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/index_en.htm).

<sup>45</sup> Herald Grethe, 128.

<sup>46</sup> EU Member States, "Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union," *Eur-Lex*, [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/12002M/htm/C\\_2002325EN.000501.html](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/12002M/htm/C_2002325EN.000501.html).

This includes elements like ‘common history’ and ‘common culture’, which emphasize that the idea of ‘Europe’ has emerged from common movements in religion, philosophy, sciences, arts, and so on. For example, when European leaders talk about a common historical narrative, they refer to the history of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome; the feudalism of the Middle Ages; the Renaissance; the Age of Enlightenment, and so on. By the same token, ‘common heritage’ also includes the element of religion, Christianity. This is for most Catholics, especially for the Pope, a precondition to define European identity. The value of religion helps strengthen the awareness of belonging to a common civilization and allows people to better face its challenges. Specific references to Christianity have, however, been eliminated from the Preamble of the new European Constitution, because of the turbulent times that Europe has witnessed in the past few years. The controversial speech from the Pope about Muhammad, the insulting drawings of the Prophet and the fear that Muslims would perceive Europe as a “Christian Club”, have led European leaders, with great discontent of the Pope and of Germany, to reject inclusion of references to religion, because that would be detrimental to the international political image of the EU.

On the basis of these premises, the debates about the European ‘common heritage’ have intensified in the context of EU enlargement, especially after the opening of negotiations with Turkey. The possibility of a future annexation of Turkey to the EU has been seen by some leaders, like Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel, as a threat to the values of the European Union, because it would destabilize the roots of European identity. The fact that Turkey’s population is Muslim is perceived as an ‘unfit’ element

for the EU, whose member states are predominantly Christian in origin. In addition, after 9/11 Islam has acquired a negative connotation through the world press, which has given rise to the stereotype that Muslim is synonymous with terrorism. Although not all Islamic countries support terrorism, the memories of the World Trade Center attacks and of the Spanish and London bombings are still strong for most Europeans. They do not feel ready yet to open the doors of the EU to Turkey and deal with the problems associated with this Muslim country.

Skepticism and mistrust also come from Turkish historical background. Turkey's history, in fact, does not have in common with Europe the values of humanism, science, reason that have been at the root of European history and philosophy. It is, instead, the history of the Ottoman Empire and the Caliphate, which has intertwined with the rest of Europe only thanks to the Byzantines and the reforms made by Ataturk. Until then, the Turks had always been feared as being bloody conquerors, as recalled by the many European proverbs about their actions and killings.

Another important issue that has been at the heart of many European debates is the question of borders. Following the last two enlargements, which consisted of the accession of 10 member states in 2004 and of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, the EU needs to pace itself and decide where its borders lie. The EU, with the opening of negotiations with Turkey, and with the promise of considering Ukraine's aspirations for membership, has taken a step too far, politically, ideologically and geographically speaking. Every country can have a European vocation and change its institutions and laws in alignment with the EU; what is important is how far the EU can extend its



borders. The answer to this question can be framed by the fact that a country must lie within the European mainland. Turkey's total area, for example, lays 5% in Europe and 95% in Asia. This is a common claim as to why it cannot be counted as European. There are some people, though, who point out that Robert Schuman, one of the founding fathers of the European integration, once said that: "Europe should be open to all those who share its values".<sup>47</sup> This argument is quite controversial because when Schuman said this, the European Economic Community was still at the very early stages. The development of events and the recent enlargements have changed the perception of Europeans about opening the EU to whichever country is able to align its policies with those of the member states. Spreading the EU far from its core would endanger the political stability of its institutions, as well as weaken its set of values. In fact, if Turkey joins the EU based on political elements only, while disregarding those values that go behind the Treaties, then the EU could have easily accepted Morocco's application for accession in 1987. The latter has been rejected on the geographic grounds and now, Turkey's accession may lead to Morocco's renewal of its demand.

Europe's enlargement is a powerful political tool that needs to be monitored, because it has the potential of being used in an improper way, leading the EU leaders to accept countries' membership as a "reward" to those states that adopt democratic principles and that pledge allegiance to European member states with the promise of supporting EU's security and foreign policy. This is also the case of Turkey, whose negotiations with the EU have the purpose of securing its alliance to member states, as

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<sup>47</sup> Graham Watson, "Where Do Europe's Borders Lie?" *Turkish Weekly Opinion*, April 20, 2006, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/comments.php?id=2044>.

well as the stability of the country's borders. Following the entry of Turkey, no European official could guarantee that the problems in the Middle East would decrease and that EU borders would be safe. If instability occurs, would the EU offer its membership to those misbehaving countries to secure peace and democracy in the neighborhood? This is why the EU needs to define its borders and the parameters to join, specifying the conditions required to become a member in the new Constitutional Treaty. The latter contains a very general provision, Article I-1, which recalls Schuman's statement about values and commitment to them. These words, however, are taken from a time when the EEC was just beginning and may not apply to the EU's current level of expansion. It is important, therefore, that Europeans reach a common decision about what values, aside from the political, economic and human rights criteria, would be necessary to judge if a country is sufficiently European to join and how far can the EU borders stretch out.

### **Analysis of Turkey's Institutions and the Power of the Armed Forces**

Another argument against Turkey joining the EU is the country's history of political instability, which is visible through weak and often corrupted institutions. The reason why democracy in Turkey has not entered fully into force, as has occurred in the industrialized economies of Western Europe, is due to the development of an authoritarian state that has its roots traced back to the Ottoman Empire. With Ataturk's Revolution and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the Turkish people began to emancipate and to become familiar with the values of democracy. Their role in the society, however, never fully developed due to the strong state bureaucratic

apparatus, whose sovereignty came before all else. This centralized system, where the society serves the state, was not opposed by secularists, who saw it as a way to keep the Islamic fundamentalist forces under control.

The institutions that emerged from this system aimed at prioritizing the interests of the state and then the needs of the people. This type of governance, unfortunately, continues to exist in the Republic of Turkey and has significant repercussions on the civil society's forms of organization. For example, trade unions and non-profit organizations are strongly discouraged from voicing opinions about public policy, because of the government officials' fear of a change in the current *status quo*. The only way to participate in matters of policymaking is through a patronage system, where kinship and corruption dominate.<sup>48</sup>

Governance like this may lead eventually to the development of different societal behaviors, one which may witness some citizens becoming very obedient and respectful of the state, whereas another may see people adopt strategies to overcome the immense pressure applied on them. An example of this could be the supporters of the AKP Party who, according to some, are silently struggling for a return to Islamism, symbolized by the headscarf worn by President Gul's wife.

The constant swing from Islam to secularism and the strong centralized and bureaucratic state apparatus are clear symptoms that Turkey is not an ideal candidate for EU membership. The institutional problems that the country is facing can be helped by

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<sup>48</sup> Semih Akcomak and Saeed Part, "Analyzing Turkey's Institutions," in *How "Black" is the Black Sheep Compared to All Others? Turkey and the EU*, June 2006, United Nations University, <http://www.merit.unu.edu/publications/wppdf/2006/wp2006-024.pdf>, 14-17.

the European Union's structural support (e.g., funds, expertise, incentives, etc), which can be established through, for example, a 'Privileged Partnership', instead of a full membership. What Turkey needs is to create institutions with the help of a higher level government like the European Commission, which would supervise the process and guarantee that these institutions won't act as impediments to economic and political performance. The promise of membership can help Turkey only at the initial stage of its reforms, after which the country has to be able to run those institutions by itself; if it is unable to, it could jeopardize the political stability of the European Union member states.

An example of an internal precarious institution that may lead to instability in the EU if Turkey joins is the military. The Turkish Armed Forces look at themselves as the promoters of the secularist ideology and they reject any threat that could endanger Kemalism. The position of the military forces in the government decision-making process has always been a predominant one, thanks to the patriarchal role they inherited from Ataturk's Revolution, as well as the authority given to them by the 1982 Constitution, which was established during their rule. The level of power exercised by the military has encountered EU officials' objections and criticism, which forced the Turkish government to reduce their budget and influence in the public life of the country. This decision, together with the EU states' apparent support for the Kurdish cause, has generated anti-EU sentiments within the military forces, as well as a sense of antipathy for EU policies.

The strong Turkish military distrust for the European Union and their continued guardianship role over politics within Turkey raise doubts about the possibility of Turkish membership. If Turkey joins, it would bring to the European Union its own internal

problems, which would create political instability. It would be detrimental to the EU to annex a country whose government risks being overthrown by the military when they believe it is threatened by Islamic fundamentalists. These events would jeopardize the purpose of the European Union which, according to forerunners like Schuman, Spinelli and Jean Monet, is meant to uphold the establishment of peace, stability and solidarity. Europe has already witnessed two major wars in the past century and numerous conflicts and insurrections. The consequences of this fighting were the reason for the peoples of Europe to lay down their weapons and unite together in peace.

The Turkish military's aggressiveness would also constitute a significant obstacle to the Turkish government, which is attempting to implement EU reforms. This has already been visible in their opposition to the AKP's EU-oriented Cyprus policy and in their hostility toward EU tolerance of the Kurds.<sup>49</sup> The latter have been persecuted by the army, which has launched innumerable small raids and some major ones in Northern Iraq in the 23 years of conflict with the PKK. The emergence of an independent Kurdistan, which could encompass parts of southern Turkey's land and those of neighboring countries, could trigger Kurdish rebellions within Turkey and put northern Iraqi oil resources under Kurdish control. Given that a potentially wealthy and hostile country may arise on Turkey's southern border, the Turkish army is constantly forced to undertake military action to keep the situation under control.

The army's hostility against the PKK makes it difficult for the Turkish government to implement reforms that could improve the human rights situation and, in

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<sup>49</sup> International Crisis Group, "The Turkish Armed Forces," 22.

turn, help Turkey fulfill the Copenhagen Criteria's tenet about protection and respect of minorities. The military forces have a certain degree of influence over the government's decisions, especially in relation to the protection of the fundamental principles of the republic, which include the pursuit of secularism and the concept of the population's single identity. The development of the idea of 'Turkishness' has led the state to take measures against Kurdish political attempts, including non-violent criticism, that could threaten national identity, as well as the integrity of the state's structure. A recent example is the case of Leyla Zana in 1994, the first Kurdish woman elected to the Turkish Parliament, who was sentenced to fifteen years in prison for her "separatist speech". In 2004, she was released thanks to the pressures applied by the European Court of Human Rights.<sup>50</sup>

The Kurdish issue is not the only minority problem that has haunted Turkey in the last few years. The Armenian question also represents a major element that is dominating European debates and creating obstacles to Turkey's membership goals. The Armenian massacre, which occurred during the First World War under Ottoman rule and which witnessed the death of 1.5 million people, has led to the question among member states about whether Turkey should, before it joins the EU, acknowledge that the massacre was genocide. The majority of EU member states, including France, agree that Turkey should admit its mistakes and ensure that the atrocity is recognized as such. Turkey, however, rejects vehemently European statements about the massacre, fearing that it would entail expensive compensation, as well as a loss of integrity and honor. Because of the

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<sup>50</sup> "Kurdish Political Prisoner Leyla Zana Released after a Decade in Jail," *Democracy Now*, June 10, 2004, <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=04/06/10/1425202>.

repercussions that the acknowledgment of the genocide could have on the government, Turkey's officials have decided to punish with prosecution any criticism about the fact. Examples of opinion's suppression were the cases of writers like Orhan Pamuk and Elif Shafak, who have both been charged for their statements about Turkey's crimes against the Armenians.<sup>51</sup>

The pressure exercised by the Turkish government to keep the Armenian case under control is based upon the necessity of safeguarding the integrity of the state, as well as the national identity. The importance of these concepts is visible in the development of Turkey-Armenia relations, which have suffered from some setbacks, due to the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis.

The Nagorno-Karabakh is an autonomous region created by the Soviet Union in 1923 within the territory of Azerbaijan, where over 94 per cent of the region's population was Armenian. As the Azerbaijani population grew, the Armenians found themselves commanded by a discriminatory rule and began to support secessionism, which was rejected by Azerbaijan and sparked violence all around. Once the Soviet Union collapsed, Nagorno-Karabakh's legislature decided to declare outright independence and become a republic, which has never been recognized by any international organization or country, including Armenia and Azerbaijan.<sup>52</sup> Turkey has played a major role in the peace process, by being a staunch supporter of the Azerbaijan cause and by closing its border with Armenia, which claims that Turkey's projects, such as the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline, are meant to isolate the country economically. The pipeline, in fact, transports

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<sup>51</sup> International Crisis Group, "The Armenian Question," 26.

<sup>52</sup> Lionel Beehner.

crude oil from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean, passing through Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, Tblisi, the capital of Georgia, and Ceyhan, a port on the south-eastern Mediterranean coast of Turkey. The reason why Turkey is trying to bypass Armenia economically speaking is due to the tensions that have developed in the relations between the two over the genocide question, as well as the fact that Turkey has in common with Azerbaijan culture, history and language similarities.

The problems with the Armenians, the Kurdish issue, and the armed forces' influence in Turkish politics are great impediments for Turkey's membership goals. The EU could initially help to generate trust between these parties but it would be up to Turkey, eventually, to figure out a way to eliminate all the prejudices about Turkish discrimination and violence against minorities. European membership would not help solve the problem, even if it could help boost better relations between Turkey and its minorities. The spirit of recognition of their rights has to come directly from the national government, which has to find a way to rein in the army generals and to grant Kurds and Armenians rights of freedom, expression, thought, travel and assembly, because these values are the milestones of European integration and all member states are required to fulfill them before being part of the Union.

Turkey needs also to make an effort to ensure the improvement of its judicial system. The weakness of the national courts, especially of the Constitutional Court, lies in the protection of the integrity of the state, which makes justice and impartiality difficult to achieve during trials. The government, therefore, has to guarantee that minority rights are not just nice values enshrined in the Constitution, but they are also



fairly interpreted in practice. The gaps in the justice system leads some European member states to think that Turkey is not an ideal candidate for the EU, due to its doubtful democratic principles, visible through the failure of institutions, the intervention of military power, and the lack of respect for human rights. These constitute major obstacles in the implementation of the Copenhagen Criteria. The EU is not about economic efficiency only, but it also relies upon the principles of liberty and democracy, the rule of law and the respect of human rights. These values are the foundations of the Treaty of Rome and of all the other Treaties that have led to the formation of the European Union.

### **Turkey and the EU: Foreign Policy Issues**

Debates about whether Turkey is a bridge between East and West have intensified during the country's negotiations with the European Union. With Turkey's entry, the EU borders will extend to the southern Caucasus (Armenia and Georgia) and to Syria, Iran and Iraq. This will bear implications both for EU foreign policy interests and relations with these neighbors and for the EU's internal security. The latter has witnessed a deep split among member states over a major issue, the Iraqi war, which has dominated the international arena since 2003. The divergence of opinions in the EU shows that the CFSP will remain intergovernmental in the foreseeable future and that it would be unlikely in an EU of 27 states or more to find a common agreement. With Turkey's accession, the EU member states will have to deal with issues that previously would have been considered as either essentially bilateral between Turkey and its neighbors or not seen as a high priority for the EU. These issues would range from visas and border

controls, to Turkey's internal problems with the Armenian and Kurdish minorities, or potential disputes over resources in the Middle East. In addition to this, Turkey may rely on its large army and on its geo-strategic importance to exercise a certain degree of pressure on the EU member states to influence the European security policy to satisfy its own interests. This, for example, has already been visible during the recent Iraqi War, when Turkey denied military access through its territory to US troops. This decision was due to fear of being judged by the Arabic world and to its own interests in Iraq, in particular the Kurds in the north. The Turkish government's concerns over the potential formation of an independent Kurdistan and the fact that the Northern-Iraqi Kurds populate a region which is known for its oil resources, has increased Turkey's skepticism to follow an *Atlanticist* agenda and has led the country to adopt a separate stance from the West. Turkish position over the issue may have a huge impact on European foreign policy, if Turkey joins the EU.

Turkey is also seen by many experts as a weak player in the Middle East, which raises doubts about the country being a bridge between East and West. For example, the relations between the Turkish and the Arabs have never been easy, due to the country's open western mentality which enters into conflict with the Arabs' conservative one. The relations with Israel, though an ally, have also seen some strain. Erdogan, for example, strongly criticized Israel attacks on the Palestinian population, calling it 'state terrorism'.<sup>53</sup> Turkey's relations with other Middle East countries vary. Recently, Turkey has increased economic ties with Syria and Iran, which are considered by

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<sup>53</sup> Kirsty Hughes, "Foreign Policy," 29.

Europeans and Americans as sponsors of terrorism. Turkey's economic cooperation over water resources, for example, could help improve the relations with the West but, at the same time, could turn Turkey into a Trojan horse, where terrorist groups might easily infiltrate across its borders and reach the heart of Europe.

Turkish accession will also impact on the EU's developing and complex relationship with Russia, which may not welcome further expansion of the EU along the southern shores of the Black Sea. Russia's hostility could also be triggered by the fact that European member states are trying to diversify their oil and gas supplier, by supporting Turkey's decision to build pipelines running from the Middle East to the Mediterranean and by replacing the Russian gas company with something more affordable.

A further impact on the EU foreign policy will come from Turkish-Greek relations, which have always been tense due to the disputes over Cyprus and the Aegean Islands. The recent rapprochement between the two countries has led European member states to think that there might be a chance for the stabilization of their political relations. In addition, Turkish Cypriots' support for the UN Plan has increased Turkey's credibility in the political community and has created hopes for the end of the island division. However, Turkey's action of closing all the ports and airports to traffic coming from Cyprus, which occurred following Greek-Cypriots' entry into the EU in 2004, shows that Turkey will probably never completely end the hostility toward the Greek-Cypriot population on the island. There is too much at stake for Turkey to give up its claims and to let the Greek side to come out of the dispute without any scratch.

Lastly, Turkey's entry into the EU will raise the problem of the country's border. EU membership will, in fact, allow Turkey to adopt the same freedoms of movement as the other European countries, which may pour into member states problems like human trafficking, drugs, illegal immigration, and so on. Turkey, once in the EU, would be part of the Schengen border free area, which is the 1985 Agreement over the abolition of systematic border controls between the participating countries. Although Schengen includes provisions on the external border controls and cross-border police cooperation, Turkey will be unlikely to meet these requirements any time soon, because it is a transit country with borders that are quite difficult to protect, especially its southern-east ones.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Comparing Turkey to Central Eastern European Countries**

#### **Would a 'Privileged Partnership' Work?**

Turkey's internal problems and weak institutions make some EU member states think that Ankara is not yet ready to be on a par with other European countries. To be part of the European Union, Turkey will need to reform its political and economic system, which otherwise may lead to the creation of a 'two-speed' Europe. This is a concept that has already been proposed, after the failure of the EU Constitution to enter into force, by France and Germany, which advised for the formation of a "pioneer group" of EU countries leading to rapid European integration and allowing slower or less 'European' member states to lag behind. The idea of a 'two-speed' Europe may be detrimental for the integrity of the EU, because it would cause divisions among member states. One may argue that divergences within the EU already exist, due to the adoption of the Euro and of the Schengen area by some countries and the rejection of them by some others, like Great Britain. However, the decision about the Euro and free border controls do not jeopardize the idea of 'unity', which is mostly political. If a country like Turkey joins, it would require help to be in conformity with EU parameters, which would take time and effort. This would, in turn, reduce the speed of the process of integration, as Turkey may be one of the slowest countries to adapt to changes.

Because of these concerns, some European states like France, Austria and Germany offered Turkey a 'Privileged Partnership' as a substitute for membership. Such

a partnership would imply obligations to comply with the EU set of rules, ranging from visa approvals for those who want to visit Turkey to regulations applied to Turkish companies that want to export their products to Europe. This type of system, however, would not provide any motivation for large reforms in Turkey, but it would simply confirm what Turkey has already in place with the European Union, which are strong economic and security ties. A ‘Privileged Partnership’ ignores all the other aspects that the country is maturing, such as a flourishing democracy, a modern civil society, cultural developments, and so on. All these elements would be disregarded with the establishment of a ‘Privileged Partnership’, which would lead, eventually, to a dramatic rupture in EU-Turkey relations. The potential ‘break-up’ between the two is more likely to occur if Turkey sees its hopes for membership rejected, because of the promises that the EU made at the Helsinki Summit of 1999, when it assigned Turkey with the status of candidate country and in October 2005, when it opened negotiations with Ankara. Pulling back now would be “illegitimate and immoral” according to Mr. Gul.<sup>54</sup>

Another reason why a ‘Privileged Partnership’ would not work is the fact that Turkey feels that the EU has adopted a certain degree of discrimination if one compares Turkey to the CEECs. The enlargement of the CEECs presented the same economic and political difficulties that are now seen in the process of integration for Turkey. For example, for what concerns the potential economic impact on the EU, especially in relation with the Common Agricultural Policy and the Structural Funds, the EU had to deal with high costs for admitting CEECs, due to their large agricultural sectors. *Table*

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<sup>54</sup> International Crisis Group, “Privileged Partnership,” 36.

1.0 shows that Turkey has the largest total area (Km), which is mostly characterized by farms, and the fastest growing population if compared to CEECs. This means that the country would qualify for assistance from the EU but, at the same time, Turkey in 1999 had a lower level of unemployment than the CEECs, which is also an important criterion for determining the budgetary costs of Turkey’s accession to the EU.

**Table 1.0 – A Comparison of the Size of Turkey with Applicants of the CEECs**

Year 1999	Total Area (Km)	Population	Unemployment (%)
Turkey	775 381	63 451 980	6.4
Bulgaria	111 300	8 230 700	16.0
Czech Rep.	79 800	10 290 780	9.9
Hungary	93 270	10 920 087	7.8
Poland	313 879	3 866 7980	10.7
Rumania	238 689	2 589 7780	6.3

*Source:* Data from Arikan, “Conceptualizing the EU’s Enlargement Policy: Motivations, Conditions and Instruments for the EU’s Enlargement Policy,”<sup>12</sup>; Eurostat, ‘Statistics in Focus: Key data on Candidate countries’ Eurostat Press Office, Luxembourg, November 2000.

Another challenge that Turkey would pose, which is similar to the one posed by CEECs, is the high percentage of labor force employed in the agricultural sector. *Table 2.0* analyzes the percentage of the labor force in the agricultural sector in 1999 in

countries like Turkey, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria, which are considered the most agricultural economies in Europe. Turkey has one of the highest percentages, together with Romania.

Similarly important is GDP per capita, which is the value of all final goods and services produced within a nation in a given year divided by the average population for the same year. As shown in *Table 3.0*, Turkey's per capita GDP in 1999 was low, compared to other European countries; however, the GDP per capita of Bulgaria and Romania was lower than Turkey.

**Table 2.0 – The Agricultural Sector in Turkey and Selected Applicants of the CEECs**

Year (1999)	Share agriculture in GDP (%)	Share of agriculture in the labor force (%)
Turkey	14.3	41
Poland	4.8	18
Romania	16.1	41.7
Bulgaria	17.3	29.5

*Source:* Data from Arıkan, “Conceptualizing the EU’s Enlargement Policy: Motivations, Conditions and Instruments for the EU’s Enlargement Policy,”<sup>13</sup>; Eurostat, ‘Statistics in Focus: Key data on Candidate countries’ Eurostat Press Office, Luxembourg, November 2000.



**Table 3.0 – GDP Per Head in Turkey and in the Selected Applicants**

Year 1999	GDP per capita in EU (%)	GDP per head in PPC in ECU
EU 15 Average	100	20 200
Turkey	29	5 900
Bulgaria	22	5 000
Romania	27	5 700
Poland	37	7 800
Hungary	50	10 700
Czech Republic	59	12 500

*Source:* Data from Arıkan, “Conceptualizing the EU’s Enlargement Policy: Motivations, Conditions and Instruments for the EU’s Enlargement Policy,”<sup>14</sup>; Eurostat (2000), ‘Statistics in Focus: the GDP of the Candidate countries’, (Theme 2-40/2000), Eurostat Press Office, Luxembourg.

Aside from the economic challenges, CEECs have also faced political and societal problems, such as the regional conflicts following their independence from the Soviet Union. These conflicts constituted a serious threat to the stability of the European Union and Brussels’ officials decided to seek ways to settle internal disputes and to create a secure environment by integrating CEECs into the EU. Turkey presents similar political challenges, such as Kurdish nationalism, the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, political and economic issues, and so on. But, unlike CEECs, Europe is not trying hard to exercise the same degree of influence to settle internal disputes in Turkey. An example is the

Greek-Turkish dispute over the island of Cyprus or the lack of efficient instruments to speed up the democratization process in the country, which shows the failure of the European Union's approach to regulate the different situations. A possible explanation to the European behavior is that member states have always perceived Turkey in terms of economic and security advantages. Turkey's geo-strategic location between East and West and the fact that it is a modern Muslim country with a growing democracy, appeals to European states that have thought that relations with Ankara would create advantages for the development of a European Common Foreign and Security Policy by satisfying, at the same time, the country's economic interest through its participation in the Single Market. When Turkey decided to apply for membership, the European member states began doubting that the country could offer a stable economy and a solid security. Turkey, contrary to CEECs that have given up all the ties to Communism and have opted for a return to European values, which they are part of, has not managed to eliminate Islamic fundamentalism, even though it is considered a secular state. The fact that Turkey is a Muslim country and does not share European cultural values, such as a common historical narrative or religion, has been the major stumbling block for the country's eventual membership. Cultural issues, for most Europeans, are more sensitive problems than political or economic factors and must not be overlooked, because they constitute religious and traditional differences between Turkey and the rest of Europe. These sentiments have sharpened especially post-9/11, as Europeans began returning to religion and experienced an increased intolerance for Muslims, in some cases in reaction to the

crimes committed during the Iraqi war, such as the beheading of Western aid workers or businessmen.<sup>55</sup>

These arguments make it difficult to consider Turkey as a European country. Because of its social, cultural, democratic, religious and historical differences, Turkey will never be considered as 'European'. Turkey is a country overwhelmingly Asian and in terms of religion and culture it has more in common with the Arab world than the European one. The affinities that are said to exist between Turkey and Europe are purely economic and strategic and they are based upon years of special relations with European member states and participation in international association, such as NATO and the European Single Market. Aside from these elements, which define why Turkey may be considered partially "European", the country does not present any closeness to Europe's historical and cultural values, which were instead identified in the Central Eastern European Countries. It is cultural affinity with Europe, indeed, that explains why the enlargement towards CEECs was seen as a 'political imperative' for the EU. The disappearance of the iron curtain was considered a historic moment for the reunification of Europe, whose people share a 'common heritage and culture'.<sup>56</sup> This strong feeling of duty of bringing ex-communist countries back to Europe has not been perceived towards Turkey, which lies outside those cultural and ideological values that bound together the European family of nations.

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<sup>55</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Security Implications of Turkey's March Towards EU Membership," in *Turkey and the European Union*, 182.

<sup>56</sup> Asa Lundgren,, "The case of Turkey: Are Some Candidates More 'European' than Others?" in *Questioning EU Enlargement: Europe in Search of Identity*, ed. Helene Sjursen (New York: Routledge, 2006), 134.

## **Conclusion**

Turkey's potential entry in the European Union has sparked controversial debates among European member states, especially following the EU declaration about the country's candidate status at the Helsinki Summit in 1999. This decision was made on the basis that Turkey, since the foundation of the modern secular Republic, has always been closely aligned with the West, as demonstrated by its participation in numerous organizations. Turkey, for example, is a founding member of the United Nations and a member of NATO since 1952, the Council of Europe, the OECD and the Western European Union. In addition, Turkey has cooperated with the EU since 1959, when Ankara applied for associate membership of the European Economic Community and signed in 1963 the 'Ankara Agreement'. The scope of this Agreement was to integrate Turkey into a customs union with the EEC, whilst acknowledging the final goal of membership. In 1987, Turkey made a formal application to join, which was rejected on the basis that the country was not yet ready to be on par with European member states. The idea of becoming part of the European 'family of nations', though, was never abandoned by Ankara's officials, who began to exercise pressure on the European Union with the aim of eventually joining it and counterbalancing Greece's actions against them.

In order to win the hearts and minds of European member states, Turkey decided to rely on its geo-strategic position to bargain its entry into the EU, because it knew since the Cold War that Europe considered it as a bridge between East and West. In addition, Turkey was also an important player, indispensable for reducing regional instabilities in the Caucasus and the Middle East areas, as well as for providing security support during

the First Gulf War and the EU-led operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Somalia.

Turkey's support for western actions in the Middle East has always been strong, with the exception of the Iraqi war, which led to a cool off in the relations between Ankara and Washington. Even though Turkey decided to take a more independent stance from the *Atlanticist* agenda, it did not distance itself from Europeans, who relied on it to advance their security interests.

Given Turkey's strategic role, the EU decided in October 2005 to formally open negotiations with Ankara, overlooking the economic, political and cultural problems that still play a great part in the Turkish society. Brussels' decision about possibly annexing Turkey to the EU in 2015 has raised controversial arguments throughout Europe, which saw some member states like the UK favor the integration of Turkey in the European Union and some others like France, Germany and Austria oppose this idea and offer the country a 'Privileged Partnership' instead. The proposal to give Turkey something different from membership arises from the problems that are dominating the country, such as internal instability, lack of respect for human rights, especially in relation to minorities like the Kurds and the Armenians, the unstable economy and weak democratic institutions. In addition, there are issues ranging from demographic through geographic to political that are of great concern to some European member states. One commonly raised point is that if Turkey joins the EU, it would become the EU's most populous member state and this may have an impact on the European decision making process, given that voting weight depends upon a country's population. Other arguments are

related to the authoritarian Turkish state, which imposes limits on the freedom of speech and association; the armed forces, who continue influencing public life by warning to overthrow those politicians like Gul that may threaten the integrity of the secular state; the unresolved dispute between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus; the financial burden on the EU once the country joins; the spread of terrorism, and so on. These issues, even though they can cause serious economic and political consequences in the EU, are not the biggest concern for member states. Their greatest fears are, instead, related to the cultural and religious differences that have increased after 9/11 and the EU's latest enlargements.

The widening process towards Central Eastern European Countries first and now possibly towards Turkey, has led European diplomats to question the European Union's identity and where the EU borders should end. These two sensitive arguments have brought about discussions on the 'common heritage' of the European Union, which is made of a common historical narrative, culture and religion. The latter is still a much debated topic, given that some European member states have decided, to the great disappointment of the Catholic countries and the Pope, not to include any reference to religion, neither in the new text of the Constitution nor when negotiating with other countries, because it may lead them to think that Europe is merely a "Christian club" where Muslims are not welcome.

Despite the good intentions of some member states by eliminating religion from the discussions surrounding the values of the European Union, the argument over "Islam and the West" remains at the center of European debates and it can hardly be dismissed. As far as the question of Islam in Europe is concerned, one could argue that there are

over 12 million Muslims living in Europe and that the EU should not fear to annex a Muslim country. This, however, it is not the same thing as managing the integration of a new state with a huge Muslim majority, which after 9/11 became linked with terrorism. Although there is no direct link between Islam and terrorism, Turkey is a country where terrorism may infiltrate and reach the EU. If the country joins, in fact, the EU will share borders with the Middle East and the South-east Caucasus, which are considered to be politically unstable regions, where violence may develop and then spread to Europe through Turkey.

European concerns about Islam are also linked to the presence of religion in public space, which is visible through women's head scarves or full veils. A main issue, for example, is about Gul's wife, a first lady who continues to cover her head. This, obviously, does not mean that the AKP Party is ready to advocate a return to Islamic fundamentalism. However, the fact that the President's wife and a large minority of the Turkish population are wearing a veil is seen by some member states, like France, as being contradictory with the idea of European modernization and progress.

These concerns cannot be ignored, given that they may lead to unbearable problems for European member states. One of these may be that the EU would have to open its doors to countries like Morocco, which was once rejected on the basis of the geographic factor, or Ukraine, which has already been promised future consideration by European officials. Further enlargements would be detrimental for the European Union, because it would cease to be a political project and instead would have to rest content with remaining a free-trade zone. The shift from the political to the economic sphere

would not only throw the EU back to where it started in 1950s, but it would also alter the concept of identity and the values that are associated with that. These principles, which should have been identified and agreed upon long before any territorial expansion occurred, need now to be redefined along the way and be able to accommodate countries like Turkey, which is clearly far from being European.

Turkey has, without doubt, a different culture based on Islamic principles; therefore, offering Turkey a membership would cause great problems for the Union, hinging on Turkey's identity, size, demography, geography and level of development. However, pulling back the promises of belonging to the 'family of nations' would be more detrimental for the EU, especially now that Turkey is reforming its system to adapt it to the European one. Saying 'no' to Turkey would lead to a dramatic 'break-up' in the relations between Ankara and Brussels which would, in turn, cause the Muslim populations both in Europe and in the Middle East to react negatively to this decision and prove that the 'clash of civilizations' between East and West really does exist. The exclusion of Turkey from the EU would not be a smart move for Europeans who are trying to combat religious prejudices and show Muslims that western actions are about fighting terrorism, not against the Islamic countries.

In addition, Turkey's rejection would jeopardize member states' security interests, given that Turkey may act as a mediator between East and West, as well as a catalyst for the formation of a European Common Foreign and Security Policy. The fact that only member states can influence the course of CFSP and that they can draw on some of NATO's military assets to conduct peace-keeping operations independently from NATO



*Berlin Plus Agreement*), has put a strain on Turkey, which has always had a say in European actions. The only way for Turkey to continue to put pressure on CFSP is through NATO, by vetoing the use of its capabilities to European member states. This could be detrimental in the long-run for the EU, which is trying to create a European Common Foreign Defense Policy that has the scope of reinforcing the security policy framework. Turkey's membership would allow not only an improvement in the strategic dialogue between NATO and the EU, but it would also help member states in terms of military capabilities, given that Turkey has the second largest military standing army in NATO after the US.

Turkey's inclusion in the EU is important, because Europeans have to realize that in order to play a larger role in international affairs, a country like Turkey would be very helpful to have on their side, rather than as an enemy crouched at their door. By annexing Turkey, each member state could draw strength from the 'diversity' factor and use it as momentum to deepen relations with its neighbor in the name of the EU rather than promoting its own separate diplomacy. In addition, the EU would be perceived not as an arrogant actor that imposes itself upon the rest of the world, but as an entity that is capable of including a member state where Islam is the dominant religion. The annexation of Turkey in the EU would help politicians send a powerful message to Muslim countries about the compatibility of Islam and democracy, as well as enhance the EU political project. Turkey's accession will bring fresh ideas and different views that could help boost the position of the EU in the international arena, making it a more credible actor and an alternative to the United State's power.

European member states, therefore, must support the annexation of Turkey, thereby giving the EU an identity that is both multiethnic and tolerant of diversity. This identity, however, should be anchored to specific values, such as geographic proximity and the observance of the Copenhagen Criteria, which will help draw a line where enlargement should end. If these parameters were set before, it would be far easier now for the EU to decide who should belong to the 'club' and who should not. Now member states must acknowledge the fact that by promising Turkey a potential membership, the EU has complicated the rules of the game and it is now too late to back up. There is no longer a precedent by which to deny Turkey membership and a great deal to gain by allowing it to join.