

PERSPECTIVES AND GOALS FOR TURKISH MEMBERSHIP IN THE EU

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Abstract

The perspectives and goals for Turkish membership in the EU depend on the course of domestic politics, the activity of transnational actors, and a supportive trust and confidence-building procedure that not only changes the two partners, but recognises that the relationship between them is the central problem in sorting out the issue of Turkish membership. The real goals of membership have not been thought through in broad public debate in either Turkey or the EU, but will be promoted as membership talks become more concrete. In order for this process to start, the EU will need to be more specific about which concerns regarding the Copenhagen Criteria can be handled during accession negotiations.

The issue of Turkish membership in the European Union has attracted a great deal of attention since the Helsinki Council decision of 1999 to grant Turkey official candidate status. In the time that has passed, both sides have begun the process of thinking through whether Turkish membership is both possible and desirable. Much of this energy has been focused on Turkish adoption and implementation of the Copenhagen Criteria for the commencement of formal membership talks. In the European Union, the criteria have become a proxy for discussing whether Turkey ought to be admitted. In Turkey, the criteria have become a proxy for claiming a right to membership that cannot be denied.

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Remarkably little informed reflection has taken place from either the Turkish or European side, however, about what membership would mean for both parties, what both expect from the process, and what obstacles lie in the way. Instead, discussion from Europe has tended to be dominated by visceral expectations that Turkey neither does nor can belong to Europe. Discussion in Turkey has been dominated by expectations that Europe does not intend to accept the country on grounds of its religion, but lacks the honesty to say so. Whilst Turkey engages in the process of preparing for membership talks, this underlying pessimism has repeatedly given ammunition to those who want to limit the reforms designed to bring the two sides closer together. This in turn has given ammunition to those in the Union looking for any excuse to shut Turkey out of the EU.

The limited reflection on both sides of the relationship, the emotionally satisfying temptation to project intentions and character traits on the other, is a serious problem in the Turkey-EU relationship, at least on the level of popular discourse, and one that may unnecessarily sour the relationship between them and hurt their mutual interests. This article picks up on this issue, and on the problem that the current focus on the Copenhagen Criteria is not terribly helpful in bringing the two sides together. As both Turkish and European political scientists and other commentators have noted, the criteria can be interpreted very differently. Instead, the real obstacles to membership lie in two factors: the domestic politics of dealing with Turkish membership in both Turkey and the EU; and in the unavoidable dynamics of a new and evolving relationship between Turkey and Europe which are independent of the intentions of either side.

The path out of the dilemma lies first in both sides dealing with their own internal problems and sorting out what they really expect to result from Turkish membership, and second, in finding a way to learn more about the character and intentions of the other. Fortunately, it is possible to do this in a way which does not push off the issue of Turkish membership far into the future by focusing on trust and confidence building during the process of accession talks. For this to happen, it is vital that a firm date for accession talks be set in the near future, with conditions set on the start date, but recognising that minor problems with the Copenhagen Criteria can be managed during negotiations, just as they have been settled in some eastern European countries that will join the Union in 2004.

The Copenhagen Announcement and Turkey-EU Relations

The European Union made a formal decision in December 2002 to invite ten countries from eastern and southern Europe to become new members. The run-up period to this event provoked hopes in Turkey that the EU would finally set a date for formal membership talks. Indeed, much of Turkish political life in the year leading up to that point had revolved around amendments to Turkish laws and policies designed to prepare the country for accession talks. Although objections to individual requirements could be heard from some corners of Turkish politics, it is accurate to say that the Turkish public and civil society overwhelmingly supported Turkish membership in the EU and a programme of national reforms linked to that goal. The expectations of a better life for Turkish citizens and better conditions for Turkish businesses at home and abroad loomed far larger than any potential costs, and were strengthened by a popular and emotional enthusiasm to show, as the *Economist's* title page proclaimed that week, that "Turkey belongs in Europe."¹

The fact that Turkey did not receive a firm date was met with disappointment and questions of whether there was any hope for membership in the Union. Politicians in Turkey strengthened a widely-held opinion that the decision was religiously, and one might say, racially motivated. The short answer, which I will elaborate below, is that the prospects have never been better, but remain highly conditional on the decisions of voters and politicians in both Europe and Turkey. Support among European Union member state governments is not unanimous, but those countries prepared to accept Turkey should it fulfill certain criteria now constitute a majority. The fact that the European Commission has undertaken a search for staff to help with the next phase of pre-negotiation talks for its mission in Ankara, underlines the momentum of support that has been built up. What all of this means in practical terms is less certain than the fact that the willingness of European governments to take the Turkish candidacy seriously into consideration has reached a critical mass for the first time, despite the fact that there remain opponents to membership both within Turkey and the EU.

Despite the critical mass of moral support for Turkish membership, more active support from the European Union will be necessary if Turkish membership is to become a reality. In the relationship between Turkey and Europe, this active support will need to include a date for accession talks,

which recognizes the progress that Turkey has made toward fulfilling the criteria for membership, but also conditions on actually holding those talks, to ensure that European principles remain intact.

The perspectives for Turkish membership in the European Union will depend in the medium and long term not only on Turkish performance on the Copenhagen Criteria and the individual chapters of the accession talks. It will depend equally on the activity of *transnational actors* from Turkey and the EU that support continued common dialogue and understanding of circumstances on both sides of the relationship. Should this dual strategy of a date for talks coupled with conditions not be followed, it will strengthen the opponents of Turkish accession to the EU in both Turkey and Europe as the more difficult points of negotiation are opened. For Turkey, that would mean a weakening of those who promote and defend the country's policies of westernisation and Europeanisation as they have been understood in recent years, and perhaps a reversal of the movement toward European understandings of these terms. The change is unlikely to come in the form of a dramatic turn away from Europe and the west, but it could, and at the very least, it would mean a re-definition of these terms in ways that push Turkey and Europe further apart to the detriment of both.

In Turkey, this could be reinforced by the revival of definitions of westernisation and Europeanisation that have little in common with European understandings of these terms, and which tended to dominate public policy into the 1990s under the Ecevit government. If this were to happen, it would mean the reduction of westernisation to the protection of the secular political order in Turkey, and the reduction of Europeanisation to getting into the EU, which under such circumstances would not be realistic. In Europe, especially among those who oppose Turkish membership, there is already a widely held assumption that Turks have no real understanding of what it means to be western or European in a way that western Europeans would recognize.

What these opponents fail to consider is that the definition of these terms, whether *reactionary* in the form of a revivalist Kemalist movement, *euro-centric* in the form of slavish adaptation to EU demands, or *transformative*, in the form of a mutual transformation of how both sides view these terms, is contingent on the process of Turkey-EU relations rather than a sole determinant of its outcome.

The meaning of the words westernisation and Europeanisation constitute issues of European identity as a whole, and not just that of Turkish

adjustment to the European Union. Within Europe, attention has been focused on a stark choice between reactionary definitions in Turkey, which would fit well with equally conservative cultural views in Europe, and the euro-centric alternative, which has dominated the process of evaluating the Copenhagen Criteria. The latter is an asymmetrical, top-down process in which new states are expected to adapt to norms and values of the EU's old member states, frequently expressed through the *acquis communautaire*, but more recently through French claims to a right of natural leadership within the Union, and tacitly or overtly branded from other quarters by emphasis on Europe's christian heritage. It also has the attribute of being difficult to measure. When is one westernised and Europeanised enough?

These concepts, although they have the advantage of promoting needed institutional reforms in the economic and political sectors of membership candidates, have dangerous implications that have led to a backlash against the EU in current member states. It harbours the tendency to demand harmonisation over coordination, to promote uniformity rather than diversity, to sideline democratic principles of government in favour of supranational and multilevel governance, and to favour the interests of a small core of states in the Union, which impose their will on the others. It tends to be a more closed society, despite the inclusion of new members: they must be subservient, at least in the first years whilst they apply for membership.

A transformative definition of westernisation and Europeanisation, one which is released from the constraints of entrenched and nationally-specific definitions, can only be expected to realistically take place through transnational contacts that support the process of bringing Turkey and the EU closer together. The EU itself will benefit from a more open cosmopolitan process in which the nature of Europe changes with the members taking part in the Union. Not only is this necessary if the EU is to develop a sense of shared identity (not common, but shared in addition to local national identities) required for them to support the transfer of governance away from national governments to the EU level, but in the case of Turkey's differences it would result in a balancing force against right-wing extremism and christian exclusivity in Europe: an alarming and growing problem in an EU with a large muslim population.

In addition to paying attention to transnational politics, we also need to consider that many within the EU who do not oppose Turkish membership on principle are not yet sure that the EU is ready to admit Turkey as a

member. Two of these reasons have nothing to do with religion. First, in the process of admitting new members from Eastern Europe, it has already had to face questions of what impact new members would have on the institutional capacity of the Union to govern itself. Second, the EU has been even more concerned about the cost of admitting new members who would then be eligible for large financial transfers, and whose citizens might be inclined to move to other EU countries, thereby setting labour markets in turmoil. Finally, the EU has only begun to start seriously discussing the prospect of a member state with a muslim population. Until now, Christian Democrats have claimed credit for much of the integration process, particularly its early years, and setting that idea aside will not happen overnight.

The first two of these concerns dominated internal EU discussion about whether they should admit any new members from eastern Europe. The institutional reform issue has not been fully sorted out, but an arrangement has been made and anchored in the Treaty of Nice. The second issue proved highly contentious up to the point where the 10 candidate countries signed their accession treaties with the Union in 2003, but was solvable in the end. The third issue will not simply go away for the European opponents of Turkish membership either. EU member states currently have approximately 15 million muslim citizens and residents who are part of political and social life, and other muslim countries firmly within the geographical boundaries of Europe may very well apply for membership, setting precedents that are hard to ignore.

Perspectives for Membership

We can best evaluate the perspectives for full candidate status by focusing our attention on two issues. The point is not simply to look closely at how well Turkey fulfils European *standards for membership*, as we often hear from EU member state governments, the European Commission and the European press. The Ecevit government, a troubled coalition in office between 1999 and 2002, accomplished a great deal in the last year of its mandate in moving Turkey towards fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria on political, civil and human rights requirements for prospective members of the Union. The centre-right AKP governments led by Abdullah Gül (2002-2003) and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2003-) have made their intentions clear to make the final necessary adjustments. Given the determination of the government, its absolute majority in the Turkish Grand National Assembly,

and the strong support from interest groups and voters for EU accession in general, the Turkish government possesses the will and the capacity to continue implementation of this programme, barring any future backlash from the public or the military against specific measures. Given this new constellation of political motivation and legal authority, as well as a new critical mass of support from within the EU, the potential is much stronger than ever before.

Adjustment to the Copenhagen Criteria

The Copenhagen Criteria constitute standards that candidate countries need to meet before the EU commences accession talks with them. They are concentrated heavily in the areas of human, political and civil rights. In this sense, they are most important for Turkey with regard to two issues that have plagued national politics for some time, and which have traditionally polarised politics between specific societal groups and the security apparatus of the state. The first is the Kurdish question, which pits claims to local political autonomy, and rights to education, print and broadcasting in Kurdish against the constitutional imperative of Turkey's unitary and indivisible sovereignty.

The second is the separation of mosque and state, which today frequently pits the desire of conservative women to wear a headscarf, even in public buildings, where it is forbidden, against the constitutional imperative of upholding a secular political order.

Both of these constitutional points are founding principles of the Turkish constitution as laid down by Kemal Mustafa Atatürk and vigorously defended against any violation, real or perceived, by the Turkish military. The Copenhagen Criteria therefore touch on a third issue of key importance for both Turkey and Europe: the role of the security forces in Turkish politics.

In effect, fulfilment of the Copenhagen Criteria constitute a challenge to Turkish politics to find lasting and stable constitutional solutions to the first two problems, and with regard to the third, to institute mechanisms that protect the constitution without the need of military intervention or guidance.

Mutual Trust

An even more serious obstacle to membership is a *lack of mutual trust* in the relationship between Turkey and the EU. More specifically, in the concrete phase of preparing for talks and during the negotiations themselves, the most important challenge for Turkey and the EU will be to overcome mutual fundamental concerns about whether Turkey and the EU really are suited for one another. Then we will be in a better position to discuss the long-term goals of Turkey's membership in the EU. I expect that the Europeanisation process, i.e. the process of adapting Turkish laws, institutions and practices to European standards is of extraordinary importance to Turkey, and of great value in itself whether or not she finally decides to become an EU member.

The European Union announced on 12 December 2002 that Turkey would not be given a definite date to begin accession talks. However, it set out the prospect for talks in 2004, recognising the significant progress of the Ecevit government in closing the gap between European expectations and the reform of laws, constitutional provisions, and the activities of police and administrative bodies, and the AKP's stated intentions to take the process even further. I expect that Turkey's supporters within the EU are using this opportunity to push the new government under Recip Erdoğan's leadership even closer to European expectations. It is important to underline that the delay serves not only to pressure the Turkish government, but also to buy time for supporters of Turkish membership within the European Union to rally support from others who are skeptical about whether Turkish membership would be a good thing for all involved.

Whether all of this activity actually leads to Turkish membership in the EU depends on all of the participants. *On the Turkish side*, there is more that needs to be done to completely fulfil European expectations on the Copenhagen Criteria, as the EU's December declaration made clear. As we have seen with other east European countries however, it is possible to begin accession talks before the criteria have been fully implemented. The EU has launched talks in the past although it was clear that certain concerns about human rights abuses had not been fully dealt with. The treatment of Sinta and Roma minorities in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia is one example, as are the treatment of Russian minorities in Latvia in the north. Indeed, the EU has undertaken programmes during the accession talks in many of these countries to alleviate these problems.²

We can look at this contrast cynically, and say that the criteria are merely an excuse that the EU uses to brush off undesirable candidates. Some in the European Union admittedly do this, particularly older EU citizens, as Valéry Giscard d'Estaing showed in his religion-based objection to Turkish membership in the fall of 2002. Or one can look at the situation optimistically by noting that minor problems can be handled during the negotiation phase, as long as they are dealt with before accession to the Union. Problem areas from the European point of view are concentrated on the right to use the Kurdish language and on the influence of the military over elected governments, where much has been achieved, but also on censorship of the press and remaining problems of using force in the south-east of the country, where reservations are somewhat stronger.³

On the European side, there is much more to be done in convincing all member states to support the launch of formal accession talks with Turkey. The criteria-related concerns have been touched on above, and are easier to deal with than the next point. Equally decisive is the willingness of Europeans to contain and set aside *the fears and prejudices* they hold against Muslim countries. The widely-held belief that Europe's civilisation is built on Christian foundations, and is therefore incompatible with Turkish membership, has been further strengthened by Samuel Huntington's (1996) *Clash of Civilisations*⁴ thesis, and the attack on the World Trade Centre in September 2001. This segment of the population saw its view confirmed that Muslim populations are fundamentally incapable of democratic government. Ironically, it is the Christian Democrats, those politicians who insist most strongly on the need for religious influence in public policy, who are the harshest critics of the AKP winning an absolute majority of seats in the Grand National Assembly in the last Turkish elections. The reform-minded orientation of the AKP, particularly in contrast to the traditionalists attached to the Saadet Partisi, and the broad support from all segments of the Turkish population, religious or not, is overlooked. Instead, attention was focussed on the fact that Mr. Erdoğan had been banned by the Turkish judicial system from running for office on charges of religious extremism, and on the removal of the Erbakan government in 1997 through a 'gentle coup'. From the Turkish perspective, it is positive that Germany continues to be run by a coalition of Greens and Social Democrats, that they understand the difference between the AKP and its predecessors, and that they appear to want to use the perspective of EU membership to test and support the new government's intent to respect the secular nature of the Turkish state. This is not about challenging the defence of the secular state,

a function that the Turkish military has felt compelled to fulfill directly and indirectly from time to time. Rather, it is of the utmost importance that the Europeans are convinced that the AKP is serious about its programme of moderation, so that the polarisation in Turkish politics over the religion issue can be set aside. Until that happens, before the possibility has been ruled out that the military might need to defend the secular nature of the state again, Turkey will remain outside. The difference now is that the German government is apparently ready to support Turkey actively from within the EU, rather than leave the country to its own fate. This support, and the support of the American government mean that the external factors supporting Turkey's development and consolidation as a secular, western and Europeanised country have never been better, as is the case with the internal situation. For these reasons it is of great importance to keep up the pressure for membership as quickly as possible, before this window of opportunity closes.

European concerns are based not only on fears and prejudices, but also on a *natural uncertainty* that such a situation entails. In part, it is simply too early for the EU to know whether problems that have plagued Turkey for decades have been solved to the extent that they will not recur once Turkey is a member. In Europe, there is lingering doubt that the AKP has really committed itself to the separation of mosque and state in a secular political order. There are also concerns on the other side that the Turkish state, and the Turkish military in particular, could over-react to signals of religious values in public policy statements. Finally, there are concerns in Europe that the Kurdish question has not been truly solved, and will not be managed in the future on a wholly civilian basis. In other words, there are lingering expectations that Turkey's military will find itself in the centre of national politics in the future:⁵ a state of affairs that EU countries do not wish to import into the Union. Similarly, it cannot be ruled out that a future Turkish government decides to delay accession to the Union, for example to have a freer hand to fight terrorism than would be possible as an EU member state. I wish to make it clear that this is but a hypothetical example. Some EU member states have or have had serious problems with terrorism without putting their membership in jeopardy.

The existence of natural uncertainty means that a *confidence building procedure* is required that will take years to complete, but which may also be conducted alongside negotiations for Turkish accession to the EU. The depolarisation of the religious question, which must include the

normalisation of the AKP as a mass party along the lines of European Christian Democracy, the protection of the constitution through civilian measures and institutions, is a question of mutual trust concerning Turkish political actors alone. The results, however, will be decisive for the European willingness to support Turkey's membership in the Union.

In order to map out a confidence-building procedure that is workable, it is useful to frame the Turkey-EU relationship as one in which the common goal of Turkish membership is sought by both sides, and then to work out how the obstacles of natural uncertainty and weak mutual trust might be overcome.

There are two possible foundations of cooperation recognised in studies of strategic interaction where there is no outside power to enforce agreement. This is a common problem of international relations. One is based upon the character and values of the parties involved in potential cooperation. They can count on one another to act in ways that both parties find valuable over the long term because they constitute a community, a society in which each of the members is expected to have internalised values and interests of mutual importance so strongly that a deviation, or a 'defection' from agreed rules and norms, is unthinkable at least with regard to other members of the community.

Within the international relations literature, Alexander Wendt's⁶ conception of how countries distinguish between friends, enemies and rivals in the international system provides a good reference point on how this might be expected to work. Most states see one another as rivals: egotistical, opportunistic actors capable of cooperation, not terribly trustworthy, but not an active threat to one's security. Enemies, of course, are a threat to one another. Friends, those who feel bound together by a set of common values, are capable of intense cooperation and interdependence based on the expectation that deviant or defective behaviour is out of the question.

Those within the EU who stress the importance of the Union constituting a value-based community are most naturally attuned to this character or friends-based approach to cooperation. It naturally tends toward the development of smaller groups, and it tends to expand the number of potential participants very slowly, whilst the actors get to know one another better. It is a maximum demand in which countries can only become

members after a long period of establishing a reputation through their behaviour. and the question of how one might become a friend. The Copenhagen model has adopted this approach at its core. One problem, with its use is that the EU has employed it unevenly to candidates in eastern Europe, which serves to support scepticism in Turkey about European intentions.

However, it should not be forgotten that Europeans are looking for evidence that civil society, encompassing parties, voters, business and labour organisations, is not only in favour of EU membership, but also defines westernisation (civilian relationships of authority, full civilian political institutionalisation) and Europeanisation (adaptation and engagement in the ongoing governance of the Union) in ways that resemble their own. Previous governing parties and coalitions showed weaknesses in these areas, particularly in the case of the nationalist MHP within the Ecevit government. Nor have the True Path Party (DYP) in the last legislature or the National Republican Party (CHP) in the current legislature fully embraced these understandings. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) is new and finding its way as it seeks to govern and reform the country without losing popular support.

Among organisations, it is reassuring that both the business community and, to the extent that they have a voice, labour organisations, appear to support the reform processes for EU membership

The greatest source of doubt among Europeans that these new definitions have taken hold lies in the intentions and activities of the state apparatus. This means more than the influence of the military over civilian politics through the National Security Council, which is typically the first point of reference. It also refers to the activity of the security and constitutional courts in banning political parties, punishing non-governmental organisations engaged in the politics of westernisation and Europeanisation, and harassing the media for criticising state policies and activity. The open threats of the constitutional court to ban the AKP in the run-up to the national elections of 2002, repeated harassment of DEHAP members for alleged contacts with the terrorist organisation PKK, the legal action pending against German foundations connected with political parties in the state security courts (even if the cases were filed on the complaint of a Turkish politician rather than the court itself), all constitute examples of threats and intimidation against non-establishment political actors that are bound to limit the Turkey-EU relationship as long as they continue.

Having said this, the EU has shown that when an overzealous state demonstrates a change of heart, through a change in behaviour, and more easily through a change in personnel, that the prospects for membership can improve rapidly. A case in point is Slovakia, where the prospects were non-existent whilst the Meciar government remained in power. Since his absence from politics, and the end of repressive measures against other civil and political actors, the country has moved rapidly to be one of the new member states to join the Union in 2004. The difference in Turkey is that state officials are not so quickly or easily replaced as politicians, and so it becomes more difficult to tell if a change in attitude has taken place. The AKP found this out to its dismay after the Turkish courts struck down a law in June 2003 that would have forced officials into mandatory retirement at the age of 61. All of this means that we are back to the benchmark of behaviour, a trickier but still workable means of assessment.

In the context of the Turkey-EU relationship, we are struck by the fact that neither is sure about what the other thinks or feels. We cannot see inside the hearts and minds of the government leaders conducting the negotiations, nor can we be entirely sure about the voters who elect them. For these reasons, the character-based strategy is of little use to us in mapping out how the EU and Turkey might transcend the problems of natural uncertainty and weak mutual trust.

The polar opposite of character-based cooperation, the strategic interaction approach found in game theory, is also of limited use to us, although it provides an answer as to how cooperation might be promoted by actors who cannot rely on character and trust to guide future behaviour. Robert Axelrod's *Evolution of Cooperation*⁷ laid out the basis for two actors to cooperate on common projects through a strategy of actors punishing defection whenever it happens, and then reverting to being 'nice,' that is, to being willing to cooperate further on the original terms of the agreement. This approach is suitable when both actors remain separate indefinitely, and when both have the capacity to punish the other should it deviate from the agreement.

This approach could be applied easily to cooperation between Turkey and the European Union aimed at the rules under which the EU is allowed to use the military assets of NATO, or the rules under which the customs union between the EU and Turkey is operated. However, the approach is less well suited for questions of membership in an organisation, unless it is

explicit that members can be forced out against their will, thereby punishing deviant members. The strategic interaction approach assumes that actors are rivals, and works best under these circumstances. It makes no claims to how countries might move from the status of rivals to friends, nor is there any real expectation that this might happen. In essence, it does not solve the problem of mutual trust, but provides a strategy for managing it indefinitely.

It is possible, however, that a strategy can be developed with the help of institutions to gradually build up confidence and trust, without being able to see into the hearts and minds of the participants when the process begins, and relying instead of observable behaviour. Each of the participants needs to be able to focus on a process that involves external, visible commitments for each side, which then stand in place for and represent the good intentions of the parties in question.

For the European Union, to represent its good will with respect to Turkey, only the commitment of a firm date will fulfill this function. For Turkey, to represent its good will with regard to the EU, only the fulfilment of certain membership criteria will fulfill this function. For the moment, that takes us no further. It is clear that the EU will not set such a date without conditions, and it is almost as likely that without the prospect for negotiations, that the Turkish motivation to adopt European rules and regulations will more limited that it would otherwise be.

A way to make this combination more workable than it has until the present is to move the European Union toward being more specific about how it defines the criteria, without raising the bar higher than it has for the last wave of successful candidate countries. This is particularly important for those areas in which the EU has decided in the past that fulfilment of the Copenhagen Criteria suffices to commence accession talks without being entirely complete. In other words, the Union has already made decisions about which problems are serious enough to warrant blocking the start of talks over the 32 chapters of the accession agreements, and which ones can be handled whilst the negotiations are under way, provided that the problems are indeed dealt with before accession actually takes place.

Here, the EU has a challenge ahead of it, not only in terms of communicating its goals and intentions better with regard to this threshold, but also in deciding what they are. It is possible that the Union might indeed set the bar higher for Turkey than for other countries, or refuse to be

specific, in which it would send a clear message to Turkey that she is not welcome. Transparency of the EU decision-making process will therefore be a necessary part of a successful strategy for rescuing the Turkey-EU relationship.

Transparency and information will also have to be a cornerstone of the Turkish accession process. Here I am not thinking about the formal Copenhagen Criteria, which is more than obvious and subject to intense scrutiny, but rather about the intentions of the ruling AKP party, and of the country's military. It cannot be stressed strongly enough that any reasonable doubt of their mutual commitment to a democratic, secular state will keep Turkey out of the Union. Again, it is the problem of natural uncertainty in this regard which is more decisive than the more technical details of whether economic and social regulation can be adapted to EU norms. It is all the more important to stress this point since it does not form a formal point of the accession negotiations, but will affect the decision nevertheless.

Goals and Expectations

Turkey

Turkey's goals and expectations for membership are focused principally on what it wants to leave behind it: the political and economic mess that the country finds itself in. At least this is what significant segments of civil society are looking for, including the country's business community. Organised labour unions, and even many political parties, however, have not internalised this message.⁸ Getting into the EU for supporters is not just about financial aid or the right for citizens to move throughout the Union, or being part of the proper club. If it were just this, then Turkish voters would have had a difficult time choosing in the last election, when most parties tried to out-do one another in positioning themselves as pro-European. Rather, Turkish voters put strong hopes in the AKP to help clean the stables of Turkish politics, and introduce reforms to the legal and administrative systems that would allow and end to the country's politically-influenced economic problems, such as inflation, recurring bank failures, and the lack of a reliable legal and regulatory apparatus for handling disputes.⁹ As has been emphasized elsewhere, Turkey's National Plan to adapt the country's laws to European expectations is largely complete. What remains is the question of actual implementation.

Given this demand for reform, the accession process is valuable, but it is also conceivable that EU membership becomes less attractive once the reforms have been largely completed. In fact, this is highly likely, if the experiences of other countries that have entered the Union since 1995 tell us something significant. The most common complaints touch on the EU's antidemocratic tendencies, on what some consider to be the unfair distribution of resources, and more recently, the fact that the EU is in the form of a major re-organisation of its institutional structure that many new members find unattractive.

On the question of democracy, the European Union removes the right of national governments and parliaments to decide over most aspects of economic policy and regulation, as these are governed by EU rules decided by qualified majority vote in Brussels, or imposed by the European Court of Justice. Rules and regulations designed to serve the public interest could be declared illegal as a result. Current discussions to increase the democratic powers of the European Parliament to counteract the flood of decisions taken without democratic control have remained disappointing. On the other hand, the EU has expanded its range of social, environmental and economic regulation in recent years to a degree that is unpopular with the Union's less developed economies. These countries naturally wish to keep the costs of regulation low enough to encourage inward investment.

At the same time, the funds available for new members to restructure their economies, whilst considerable, have disappointed many, and the situation is not likely to improve within the current budget period, which extends until 2007. One major reason is that France insists on the retention of the Common Agricultural Policy, of which it is a major beneficiary despite its status as a rich nation, and which constitutes 40 percent of the EU budget. Another is that the rules of monetary union have locked the more prosperous European economies into a state of ongoing weak growth, which means that the overall pie is not growing. Finally, the large number of new members in 2004 and Turkey's overall size mean that the payoff for claims for aid will continue to disappoint in the future.

Finally, the European Union is in the process of discussing the creation of a constitution for Europe. This could entirely restructure the nature of the EU, and lend it a character that appeals differently than the current arrangement. As the EU is a moving target, so to speak, and as it is possible that Christian Democrats and the Vatican will succeed in their lobby efforts

to have the EU declared a Christian community, it remains to be seen what the EU will look like when the Turkish reform process is over.

Europe

Europe's goals are less clear, and in fact it would be impossible to suggest that the European are of one mind on the issue. Indeed, the EU has not really begun to go beyond the fears and prejudices it has with regard to Turkish membership to discuss what it might get out of Turkish accession. In a sense, this is not surprising. The EU did not have a clear sense of what it intended to get out of the eastern enlargement comprised of countries formerly ruled by communist governments, except that it might prevent a bad scenario of war and ethnic conflict on its eastern borders. This was considered a possibility either among countries west of Russia, or in the event of the revival of Russian militarism and imperialism, from Russia itself, a scenario that was particularly strongly represented by the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In that sense, eastern enlargement happened more because the EU did not know what else to do about the region, more than having a direct stake in having more members. This is particularly so for those countries outside of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, which enjoyed considerable German support in the Union.

Even then, one can see through the restrictions placed on the mobility of labour and arguments over structural fund transfers that in the economic sphere, enlargement is considered more of a burden than a benefit, and that politically, with regard to the reform of political decision-making institutions and the attempts to establish a common foreign and security policy, that enlargement has caused more problems than it has solved. The sense of urgency in the eastern enlargement question therefore cannot be overestimated.

Turkey is something of a different story in European eyes. Although it wants to enter the Union, there is no similar sense that the country would fall apart and pose a greater problem to the EU without membership. On the contrary, internally, the state has always managed to hold the country together in past crises, however distasteful a military intervention might be, and externally, the presence of neighbours such as Iran, Iraq and Syria, with an effectively autonomous Kurdish territory in Iraq, raises more questions than it answers for some Europeans.

In fact, this willingness to leave Turkey on its own runs against the grain of the approach that has been used in eastern Europe, a point which ought to be emphasized more than it has been, and incorporated into a larger strategy on the EU side for the future of the relationship. The EU approach to other countries in eastern Europe is built on the conviction that democratic, prosperous, internally stable countries are in themselves a benefit to European security even if they do not join the Union, and contribute to solving international problems better than any other strategy. These include building on the successful improvement of Greek-Turkish relations since 1999, improving on the problem of illegal immigration that flows through Turkey from the middle east, more generally securing the situation of Europe's southern flank, and helping with the successful development of Europe's security policy by bringing Turkey inside the decision-making tent and contributing resources. These goals can best be pursued with Turkey inside the EU.

One of the advantages of the Copenhagen Criteria and the lack of a firm date on negotiations for accession talks from the perspective of European politics is that it gives Europeans time to sort these issues out. Therefore, to the same extent that transnational ties between Turkish and European actors are necessary for developing more trust and confidence in one another, they may be able to contribute positively to how Europe frames the cost-benefit ratio of Turkish membership. Given the wide variety of actors within the European Union participating in networks of governance attached to the EU's institutions, this strategy has the potential to help tilt the balance, even during accession talks, in the event that Turkey still wishes to join.

Summary and Conclusion

Much of the discussion about the Turkish perspectives for membership in the EU has focused on vague cultural judgements, or on the formal criteria of accession. This focus ignores the more pressing problem of mutual trust, and a suitable strategy for building confidence in the values and intentions on both sides of the relationship. Both have legitimate fears, both have significant internal issues to sort out, and both have a great deal to gain from membership as well. It is possible to work out a strategy based on transparent, open commitments that apply to all of the parties involved.

Turkey's greatest achievement for itself will lie in reforming its political and economic systems through the accession process. It needs not only

pressure, but support from outside to ensure that supporters of westernisation and Europeanisation in the business community, in the parties and in the electorate can increase their strength, even when the less attractive details of the reform process come to light. The role of transnational actors through business, unions, parties, non-governmental organisations will be vital in bringing about a strengthening of this strand of Turkish politics and society. The actual transition to membership will be but the crowning achievement in the transformation process.

Europe's greatest achievement for itself will lie in developing itself into a more truly cosmopolitan and open civil society that recognises the multiple faiths and identities of its citizens. On the one hand, Europe has been searching for a formula to describe and even promote the idea of its own identity. It has not been possible, and it is not realistic to attempt to develop a single identity for Europe, given the obvious diversity that exists between and within countries. At the national level, EU countries such as Austria, Denmark, Germany and France have also found themselves confronted with powerful right wing movements trying to fight the idea of cosmopolitanism, or at least limit it to the christian world, whatever that might mean. Those in the EU who seek an open, cosmopolitan Europe that has mature, respectful relationships with its citizens of other faiths, and which can develop mature relations with the islamic world at its doorstep, will find themselves strengthened in the fights in which they are already engaged. Given the gravity of this choice, it seems that the EU needs Turkey more than the other way around.

The greatest achievement of all, however, can only be achieved by Turkey and the EU together. Western conservatives who insisted before 11 September 2001 that muslim countries were incapable of democracy have reinforced their message since then, and used it to argue, among other things, that Turkey should turn eastward and forget the long march toward Europe that began with the liberal constitution of 1874. As the world's only muslim democracy, with all its imperfections, Turkey is in a unique position as an EU member to show that the conservatives were wrong, that muslim countries can make the grade after all, and together, that the clash of civilisations is but a mirage.

Endnotes

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