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## **The Relations of Turkey with the European Union: Candidate Forever?**

by

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### **Abstract**

This paper primarily addresses three aspects of Turkish-EU relations: the first section of the study gives an overview of the history of Turkey's relations with and the EEC/EC/ EU in the period between 1959 and 2008, focusing on "the Ankara Agreement" of 1964 (or the Association Agreement). With that agreement, which was supplemented and specified by an "Additional Protocol" in 1973, Turkey began what has become one of the longest-lasting association agreements. The second section will elaborate on the difficulties and serious disputes that have arisen between Turkey and the EU, and particularly on the current discussion of Turkey's membership. Finally, in light of the remarkable political and economic changes taking place in the international and the European arena, we will draw some lessons from the past in order to make some predictions about the path Turkish-EU relations may follow in the future.

Key words: Turkey, European Union.

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## 1. Introduction:

Turkey's relationship with the European Union (EEC/EC and now EU) began in 1959, considerably earlier than many other countries who are now EU members. A happy outcome of this longstanding relationship is still not in sight. Meanwhile, the unequal partnership that has aimed at the very different ambitions of Ankara and Brussels can be described as a story of misperceptions, misunderstandings, prejudices, disappointing and irrational expectations; but, from the beginning, the relationship was built on asymmetrical interests.

Turkey's close cooperation with the West during and after the Cold War period was not only designed to serve security and economic policy objectives, but was also an indispensable component of the process of Westernization, which was initiated over 150 years ago and which was intensified after the Republic was founded in 1923. This process served not only to strengthen Turkey's bonds with western civilization, but it was also expected to improve the country's economic and technological performance and end its democratic deficiencies. Even today, the finalization of this process remains the guiding principal and irrevocable goal of Turkish domestic and foreign policy.

On Europe's part, security interests played the dominant role in its relations with Turkey against Soviet expansionism. It is worth remembering that Turkey has been officially represented in most of Europe's institutions, such as the OECD, the Council of Europe and NATO, since 1945 and yet, as the continuing negotiations between Ankara and Brussels suggest, it has not been cordially accepted as a part of European family. As Oral Sander has pointed out, "the Europeaness" of the Russians and the Ottomans was reluctantly proclaimed for brief periods only, at times when the armed services of one or the other were needed by Europe.<sup>1</sup>

The following discussion primarily addresses three aspects of Turkish-EU relations: the first part of the study gives an overview of the history of Turkey's relations with the EEC/EC/EU in the period between 1959 and 2008, focusing on the "Ankara Agreement" of 1964 (or the Association Agreement). With that agreement, which was supplemented and specified by an "Additional Protocol" in 1973, Turkey began what has become one of the longest lasting association agreements. The second part will elaborate on the difficulties and serious disputes that have arisen between Turkey and the EU, and particularly on the current discussion of Turkey's membership. Finally, in light of the remarkable political and economic changes taking place in the international and the European arena, we will draw some lessons from the past in order to make some predictions about the path Turkish-EU relations may follow in the future.

## 2. Relations between the EEC/EC/EU and Turkey (1959-1995)

The story of Turkey-EU relations begins with the applications of Turkey and Greece for membership in the former EEC in 1959. Brussels accepted both countries as associate members of the Community, with the prospect of becoming full members of the EEC at a future but indefinite date. The Association Agreement or Ankara Agreement with Turkey was signed in 1963 and came into effect December 1, 1964, after difficult negotiations with Brussels.

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<sup>1</sup>Oral Sander, "Turkey and the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation," in *Turkish Foreign Policy: Recent Developments*, Kemal Karpat, ed. (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), pp. 61-72.

The Association Agreement was based on three main pillars: the customs union, free movement of labor, and financial assistance through financial protocols. The keystone of the agreement was the establishment of a customs union, which was to be achieved in three main steps: a “preparatory period” of at least five years (1963-1968), the “transitory period” (1973-1995) and “final stage Customs Union” (1995). After a successful “preparatory period,” on a decision of the Association Council, the parties decided to initiate the so-called “transitory period” designated by an Additional Protocol during which a customs union for industrial products between the EU and Turkey could be created step by step. The idea behind the Additional Protocol, which came into force in 1973, was for Turkey’s integration into the European Common Market. During the transitory period, which covered the period 1973-1995, both sides undertook to abolish all customs duties and non-tariff barriers (with some exceptions) on manufactured goods within twenty-two years.

The Association Agreement between Turkey and the EU underlined not only trade in industrial commodities between the two parties but also sought to improve relations in terms of trade in agricultural products, trade in services, free movement of labor, freedom of settlement for professionals and free movement of capital (the four freedoms), the harmonization of tax systems, the coordination of transport policy, and competition rules and other regulations concerning economic integration. Another important aspect of the Association Agreement was to promote Turkey’s commitment to introducing the EU’s Common External Tariff (CET) in its trade with third and non-member countries.

The provision for the free movement of labor was the second important pillar of the Association Agreement. According to the Agreement and the Additional Protocol of 1973, free movement of labor was to be established in 1986. The final important section of the agreement included Financial Protocols, which were to assist Turkey to adjust and restructure its economy and to switch its development strategy from import substitution to world market orientation. The financial assistance would, in addition, help Turkey to reduce the negative impact of its economic integration with the Community.

On January 1, 1996, Turkey was to enter the final period of Association, which essentially consisted of the customs union, the closer coordination of economic policies between the two sides, and the adjustment of Turkish economic policies to those of the Community. The final stage of the Association was not clearly defined in the Agreement with regard to how and under what conditions future relations between the two parties would be shaped and deepened. Only Article 28 of the Association Agreement indirectly referring to the possibility of a later entry into the Community, stated that:

as soon as the operation of the Agreement has advanced far enough to justify envisaging full acceptance by Turkey of the obligations arising out of the Treaty establishing the Community, the Contracting parties shall examine the possibility of the accession of Turkey to the Community.

In practice, the clause meant that the Commission would examine the possibility of Turkey’s eventual membership in the EU by evaluating the country’s overall performance.

### *2.1. Implementation of the Association Agreement and Additional Protocol*

From the beginning, relations between Turkey and the EU were those of two unequal partners with asymmetric political and economic interests. As a result, relations could not be built on a solid basis and suffered heavily from differing political and economic interests and expectations on both sides. The Association Agreement actually worked without complications from 1963 until 1973. It was then decided by the European Commission that Turkey had fulfilled all the preconditions of the first stage of the Association Agreement (preparatory period) and could enter into the second stage of the integration process (transitory period) by signing and ratifying the so-called Additional Protocol.

According to the Additional Protocol, the EU was to abolish all customs duties and non-tariff barriers for Turkish manufactured goods with the exception of textiles and clothing, as well as petroleum products. Significantly, textiles and clothing exports were the only economic sectors in which the Turkish economy had comparative advantages. However, they were restricted and regulated by voluntary self-restraint agreements within the framework of the international Multi-Fiber Agreement.

During the transitory period, relations between Turkey and the EU suffered generally from unfavorable conditions, conflicts of obligations and misunderstandings. Neither side was ready nor willing to meet the obligations agreed on and ratified in the Agreements. Looking toward its eventual accession into the Community, Turkey wanted to mark its westward orientation process as a significant milestone but was not fully aware of the social and economic costs of integration within the EU. Turkey was to feel those costs suddenly and seriously. On the other hand, as Heinz Kramer has stated:

the EU showed only that amount of mutuality and closeness into the relationship as was regarded to be the absolute minimum necessary to ensure their interests. The EU members seemed to be reserved about forcing any steps in the direction of lasting and irreversible integration of Turkey into the EU.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the EU began to distance itself from Turkey's full membership in the EU, not only by not fulfilling the preconditions set by the Association Agreement but also through the economic and financial costs and burdens of possible membership that it did not seek to mitigate.

The following conclusions can therefore be drawn for Turkey from the implementation of the Ankara Agreement for the period from 1964 until 1996.

First, the Customs Union was not realized even gradually as foreseen in the Association Agreement. Due to economic factors that Turkey faced at different levels and periods, the country was not in a position either to fulfill its commitments gradually to reduce its customs duties against the EC countries or to reduce tariffs in accordance with the Common External Tariff of the Community. It was only in January 1988, and after Turkey's application for full membership on April 14, 1987, that Turkey actually began to satisfy the conditions and its obligations as set out in the Ankara Agreement.

Second, another serious and heated debate between Brussels and Ankara concerned the free movement of labor within the Community. Although the Association Agreement stated that

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<sup>2</sup>Heinz Kramer, „EC-Turkey Relations: Unfinished for Ever, “Stiftung *Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)*, Ebenhausen, Working Paper No. 6 (1993).

the free movement of labor between the EC and Turkey would be permitted in 1986,<sup>3</sup> the German government opposed the implementation of the related provisions of the Agreement and put pressure on other members as well to stop the recruitment of migrant workers from non-EC countries, including Turkey. Since then the issue has not come to a head again and further discussion has, apparently, been put off indefinitely.

Third, another dispute between Brussels and Ankara concerned the so-called Financial Protocols. It was assumed that under the Protocols the EU would make an essential contribution to the Turkish economy in order to protect it from the negative impact of the integration process with the EU. In fact, with the first three financial protocols, the Community granted a total of U.S. \$705 million under very favorable conditions. However, the Fourth Financial Protocol, consisting of ECU 600 million, agreed upon in 1981, has still not been delivered to Turkey. The reasons for this delay were twofold: first, Turkey became a victim of a military coup on September 12, 1980; and secondly, Athens exercised its veto, blocking aid to Turkey for mainly political reasons.

With hindsight, Turkey seems to have made certain errors of judgment that have negatively affected the development of its relationship with the EU over the years. Turkey, it is clear, was never prepared to fulfill its obligations and overcome the adjustment difficulties which would arise from integration into the customs union. One of the key aspects of the economic integration of Turkey into the EU was a gradual shift in development strategy from one of import substitution to one that was export-oriented or outward-looking.

Looking back, it could be argued that Ankara made three essential political mistakes concerning its relations with Brussels. First, Ankara missed a possibly favorable moment for negotiating full membership of the EC after Athens's application for full membership in 1975. Second, in 1978, the Turkish government, led by Bülent Ecevit, unilaterally froze its relations with the Community. Third, in 1987 it would have been more appropriate to give preference to the implementation of the customs union, instead of applying for full membership at that time. In this way, Turkey could have begun to restructure its economy and to put the adjustment process in force much earlier.

Indeed, it was obvious that Ankara was not ambitious or resolute enough to take serious steps, either in the economic or administrative fields, in order to be able to reach the final stages of the integration process. In other words, Turkey has not undertaken a forceful but realistic effort to reduce the economic gap between itself and the Community, but has rather merely paid lip service to doing so. At the same time, the European side tended to couple common defense and security costs to economic concessions. If it had not done so, i.e., without military and economic assistance from the West, Turkey would have been unable to fulfill its military commitments as a member of NATO.

## *2.2. Turkey's Application for Membership in the EU in 1987*

January 1980 can be regarded as a turning point in Turkey's economic development. As a result of serious economic problems facing the country, the Turkish government decided to

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<sup>3</sup>In Article 12 of the Ankara Agreement and 36 of the Additional Protocol it is provided that "the contracting parties agree to be guided by Articles 48, 49 and of the Treaty of Rome establishing the Community for the purpose of progressively securing freedom of movement for workers between them."

change its development strategy from an inward-looking one it had followed for several decades to an outward-looking or a world-market-oriented development strategy. Starting in 1980, Turkey undertook comprehensive stabilization and structural programs. The main aim of these radical changes was to open up isolated and uncompetitive industries to international competition. Turkey as a result made significant economic advances and structural changes in different fields of economic life.

During the 1980s, Turkey was regarded by multinational organizations as one of the most promising emerging markets with significant economic potential. With renewed self-confidence as a result of remarkable achievements in economic reform, on April 14, 1987, the Turkish government, headed by Prime Minister Turgut Özal, applied for full membership in the EU. The major inspiration behind this decision was a clause in Article 237 of the EEC Treaty, which conceded that “each European country can apply for a membership into the EEC.”

Thereafter, it took the Commission over two and a half years to prepare Brussels’ opinion on the Turkish application, which was announced by the Commission on December 19, 1989. Obviously, Brussels did not want to reject Turkey’s application directly. However, the Turkish application was clearly neither supported nor encouraged either by the Commission or any of the other member states at that time. Once again, Greece was the only country that openly expressed its objections to Turkish membership into the Community from the outset. The Commission’s decision, as reflected in the text of the Opinion, was mainly based on considerations concerning the economic gap between the two sides and can be summed up in four main points:

- very major structural disparities in both agriculture and industry,
- macroeconomic imbalances,
- a high level of industrial protectionism,
- a low level of social protection.<sup>4</sup>

The Commission’s paper also drew attention to many issues such as democratic weaknesses, deficiencies in human rights and the situation of minorities. It particularly noted that the Cyprus dispute between Greece and Turkey was an obstacle for eventual membership. In the end, the official opinion of the Commission on the Turkish application was confirmed and approved by the EU Council of Ministers.

It was not surprising that the Turkish public was shocked by this decision and there were protests, bitter reproaches and accusations. However, all this could not change the fact that Turkey seemed to be far from fulfilling the strict admission requirements for this very select club of affluent, democratic states, as Eric Rouleau, former French Ambassador to Turkey argued.<sup>5</sup>

Turkey’s strong reaction to the Community’s opinion was expected. Brussels was therefore well prepared to make the next move to revitalize relations on the basis of existing agreements. In this context, the Commission was requested by the Council of Ministers to prepare a comprehensive package of rapprochement and put it in force as soon as possible. The so-called

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<sup>4</sup>Commission of the European Communities, (1989): Commission Opinion on Turkey’s request for Accession to the Community, Brussels, December 20, 1989 [SEC (89) 2290 fin.2].

<sup>5</sup>Eric Rouleau, “The Challenges to Turkey,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, 5 (1993): 116.

“Matutes-Package” covered the following main fields of cooperation:<sup>6</sup> the completion of the customs union, the renewal of financial cooperation, the promotion of industrial and technological cooperation, and increased political and cultural links. However, when on June 12, 1990, the Commission finalized and projected this new and detailed cooperation package, signaling a fresh start for the EU-Turkish relations, Athens once again blocked its implementation.

### *2.3. Establishment of a Customs Union between Turkey and the EU (1989-2005)*

At the beginning of the 1990s, radical changes were taking place in Europe. The collapse of the Soviet Union and Turkey’s entrance into the final stage of the transitory period as stated in the Ankara Agreement coincided. Ankara was convinced that, if the provisions of the Customs Union could not be finalized as planned by the end of 1995, the country would be condemned to remain outside the third wave of the European integration process.

The strategic importance of Turkey’s role in international politics and for Western interests remained and was even enhanced; the final communiqué of the 1992 European Council in Lisbon declared, for example, that “the Turkish role in the present European political situation is of the greatest importance....”<sup>7</sup> The impact of this change in EU policy, so closely related to the new international political environment in Europe, brought both sides together on November 9, 1992, at a meeting of the Turkish-EU Council of Association in Brussels. The two sides agreed on a new two-track approach to future relations:<sup>8</sup> First, the political dialogue, which covered consultation on foreign policy issues of mutual interest, would be continued on a regular basis and would be intensified and upgraded. The EU emphasized that the degree of political dialogue would then be matched only by its political dialogue with the United States and Japan. Second, the Government of Turkey confirmed its intention to complete its transition to full participation in the EU customs union by January 1996.

The EU and Turkey now engaged in a new program to achieve that deadline. The Association Council met on November 9, 1993 and Brussels agreed to a final negotiating timetable to take Turkey into the customs union with the EU in 1996, marking the biggest change in economic relations between the two sides in thirty years. Brussels and Ankara were by now fully aware of the requirements of the agreement, and tried to catch up within a single year what they had failed to do over the past thirty-five years. One point was clear: that Ankara saw this as its last opportunity and was determined not to miss the last train to Europe. It seemed to be ready to pay the price regardless of what the ticket might cost. It was apparently recognized and accepted by the Turkish leadership that, by participating in the customs union, Turkey would not only share and enjoy the full benefits of the Community’s common commercial policy, but it would also share the costs and obligations of such a commitment.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>See Commission of the European Community, Commission Communication to the Council concerning relations with Turkey and proposal for a Council decision about a Fourth Financial Protocol, Brussels, June 12, 1990 [SEC (90) 1017 Final].

<sup>7</sup>Press- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, Bulletin (Bonn), 1.7.1992, 71, pp. 673ff.

<sup>8</sup>Michael Lake, “The European Community in 1993 and its Relationship with Turkey” (unpublished paper presented at the Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Bilkent University, Ankara, 1993), p. 20.

<sup>9</sup>Article 9 of the Treaty of Rome states that “the Community shall be based upon a Customs Union which shall cover all trade in goods and which shall involve the prohibition between member states of customs

By 1989, Turkey had already gradually begun to reduce tariffs on EU produced industrial goods. At the beginning of January 1995, over 80 percent of all Turkish imports were free of duties or taxes, which were based on two lists of products with two schedules of tariff reduction: a twelve-year list and a twenty-two-year list. The implementation had already reached 90 percent of the target on the first and 80 percent of that on the second list of the scheduled reductions. The next important measure that had to be taken by Turkey was the reduction of CET, which meant the adoption and implementation of all the preferential trade agreements that Brussels had already signed with third countries, and the adaptation of all Turkish trade agreements with other countries to those agreed by the EU. By 1993 reductions in the CET were already 80 percent for the twelve-year list and 70 percent for the twenty-two-year list.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, Turkey was also facing another economic crisis by increasing macro-economic imbalances. The expansionary demand policies followed by the governments induced the acceleration of inflation, deterioration in the balance of payments and a diminishing rate of growth. Simultaneously, there were mounting internal and external political difficulties, such as PKK terrorism, the rise of religious extremism, and unstable coalition governments. These economic and political difficulties, as well as concerns about missing the last train to Europe, worsened Turkey's bargaining position in its negotiations with Brussels on the establishment of the customs union. In addition to this, Turkey witnessed two general elections within the space of four years. It was a period of election campaigns in which the parties were primarily preoccupied with domestic policy issues, more or less overlooking the country's EU project. As always, foreign policy issues assumed a secondary role. As usual, there was often more euphoria and rhetoric during the election campaign than pragmatism.

### *2.3.1 Main outlines of the Customs Union:*

After a series of negotiations, the agreement to establish the Customs Union was signed on March 6, 1995. With the final approval of the European Parliament in December 1995, the last barrier for accession into the customs union was to be removed as of January 1, 1996. According to the decision (No 1/95) of the Turkey-EC Association Council of December 22, 1995 on implementing the final phase of the Customs Union,<sup>11</sup> Turkey would first eliminate all customs duties, quantitative restrictions, and all charges having equivalent effect to customs duties and all measures having equivalent effect to quantitative restrictions in trade with EU as of January 1, 1996.

This meant that:

- Turkey had to completely open its economy to international competition.
- The Customs Union only covers the free trade of manufacturing commodities and processed agricultural products and not primary products and services;

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duties on imports and exports and of all charges having equivalent effect and the adoption of customs tariff in their relations with third countries." In other words, participation in a customs union means the elimination of all customs tariffs and charges having equivalent effects, as well as quotas and measures having equivalent effect, which are forbidden by Article 30 of the Treaty.

<sup>10</sup>For comprehensive research on this topic, see Subidey Togan, *The Turkish Foreign Trade Regime and Trade Liberalization during the 1980's* (Ankara: Turkish Eximbank, 1993), pp. 24-28.

<sup>11</sup>Decision No: 1/95 of the EC-Turkey Association Council of 22 December 1995, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, Turkey, February 13, 1996.

- It would adopt the Common Customs Tariff (CET) against third country imports by January 1, 1996, and all of the preferential agreements the EU had concluded with third countries by the year 2001. In the case of particular products specified according to article 19/2 of the Additional Protocol, Turkey would impose higher tariff rates than those in the CET for another five years.
- The creation and full functioning of a Customs Union did not only require trade-related measures; equally important were activities concerning the regulatory framework of production like state aid, subsidies to enterprises, competition and anti-trust policy, and industrial and intellectual property rights. Turkey would have to conform to EU standards in all these spheres.
- With a view to harmonizing its commercial policy with that of the Community, Turkey would align itself progressively with the preferential customs regime of the Community within five years from the date of entry into this decision. In practice this meant that Turkey would lose its national sovereignty concerning foreign trade policy without any form of active participation to the decision making process in Brussels.
- An EU-Turkey Customs Union Joint Committee would be established. The Committee would carry out exchange of views and information and formulate recommendations to the Association Council.

On the other hand, the EU would resuscitate financial aid and the Financial Protocol in order to ease Turkey's adjustment process into the existing rough competition conditions and to close the gap in economic development between the two sides. The financial assistance comprised five fundamental components:<sup>12</sup>

- Within the framework of a five year program, ECU 375 million yearly from Community budget sources, starting on January 1, 1996,
- Within the framework of the Mediterranean Program (1992-1996), ECU 300-400 million.
- An uncertain amount of financial assistance from the Mediterranean Fund amounting to ECU 5,5 billion, starting in 1996,
- Project loans of ECU 750 million yearly, financed by the European Investment Bank over a period of five years.
- Macroeconomic assistance, if necessary and upon the demand of the Turkish government, in coordination with the relevant international institutions; the total amount of financial aid planned for the following five years was around ECU 6 billion.

### **3. Turbulence and hindrances: from Customs Union to Candidacy (1996-1999)**

The European Council Meeting in Luxembourg on December 12 and 13, 1997, marked not only a moment of historic significance for the future of the Union and of Europe as a whole but also for relations of the EU with Turkey. EU leaders proclaimed "the dawn of a new era" after a historic two-day summit in Luxembourg which took the first step towards opening the bloc's door to the countries of former Communist-dominated Eastern Europe.<sup>13</sup> Negotiations

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<sup>12</sup>Decision No: 1/95 of the EC-Turkey Association Council of December 22, 1995, Financial Protocols. In: *Official Journal of the European Communities*, Turkey, and 13.2.1996.

<sup>13</sup>*The Irish Times* on the Web, December 15, 1997.

were to open with Poland, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and Cyprus beginning on March 31, 1998, on the basis that they were best qualified and prepared for the rigors of full membership. Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania were deemed less prepared, but were included in comprehensive pre-accession partnerships and annual screening arrangements designed to accelerate their progress towards membership.

Turkey, an applicant to join the EU since 1963, was in a third category, with special conditions. The Council offered Turkey only a vaguely defined “strategy of rapprochement” and said it should improve its human rights record and treatment of minorities as well as compromise on issues directly related to Greece and Cyprus.

The crisis in Turkish-EU relations blew up after the summit meeting when the EU refused to place Ankara as a formal candidate for future membership in the same category as the former Communist countries in central and southeastern Europe. Ankara was very upset both at being left out of the enlargement process and, at the same time, being invited to the “European Conference” in 1998 on certain conditions.<sup>14</sup>

The Turkish Prime Minister, Mesut Yilmaz, told a news conference on December 14, 1997, that Turkey was cutting off political dialogue with the European Union and rejecting an offer to take part in a pan-European conference in 1998. The Prime Minister, reacting to the EU summit decision, declared that “There will not be a political dialogue between Turkey and the EU. Turkey would ignore statements by the EU on Turkey’s rows with Greece and Cyprus.” And, he added: “We accept none of the conditions attached to the conference proposal. This issue has lost its meaning for us. Rehabilitation of ties will depend on the European Union if it gives up its erroneous and unjust Turkey policies.” He also pointed out, at the same press conference, that Turkey would go ahead with plans to cooperate closely with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus if the EU launched membership talks with the divided island’s internationally recognized Greek-Cypriot government, as it had announced it would.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, in rejecting Turkey’s application for full membership, the summit proposed almost the same strategy as the European Commission had in 1989. Again, Europe’s strategy for Turkey was based on building on existing agreements, intensifying the Customs Union and implementing its financial provisions, and approximating Turkey’s laws to the EU’s *acquis* as in the “Matus Plan” prepared by the EU Commission in 1990. The European Council recalled that “strengthening Turkey’s links with the EU also depends on its pursuit of the political and economic reforms.<sup>16</sup> These comprised: the development of the possibilities afforded by the Ankara Agreement; the intensification of the Customs Union; the implementation of financial cooperation; and the approximation of laws and the adoption of the Union’s *acquis*. However, after the summit, European newspapers were full of statements given by European politicians who argued that they had not had such an intention and had intended just the opposite. They proclaimed Turkey’s “eligibility” to join the EU and said that Turkey’s candidacy would be judged by “the same criteria” as the other applicant states. They promised a new strategy to

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<sup>14</sup>See for more detailed information about the summit meeting: Luxembourg European Council, December 12 and 13, 1997, Presidency Conclusions, and Luxembourg December 14, 1997.

<sup>15</sup>*International Herald Tribune*, December 15, 1997.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/1997/12/15/turkey.t.0.php>. “Turkey cuts off dialogue with EU and says it will integrate north Cyprus” *The Irish Times*, December 12, 1997.

<sup>16</sup>“The New European Strategy for Turkey,” *EU Commission*, Brussels, March 1998.

bring Turkey closer to the EU in every field. Finally, Ankara was invited to an annual conference of EU members and would-be members in London in March 1998.

### *3.1. Historical Milestone: the Helsinki Summit Meeting (1999-2005)*

If relations between Turkey and the EU had hit rock bottom in 1997 over the EU's rejection, what, then, had changed to allow Turkey to become a potential candidate within only two years?

After the capture of the PKK leader in Kenya in February 1999, the EU's General Affairs Council of February 21-22, 1999 declared:<sup>17</sup> "The EU reiterates its condemnation of all forms of terrorism. . . . The EU fully upholds the territorial integrity of Turkey." At the present time, the EU expects " . . . Turkey to resolve its problems by political means with full respect for human rights, the rule of law in a democratic society and in full accordance with Turkey's commitments as a member of the Council of Europe... The trial of Abdullah Öcalan, the procedure of the trial seems to have been largely correct and in accordance with the applicable Turkish Law. The death sentence against Öcalan has been appealed before the Turkish Supreme Court and would also have to be confirmed by Parliament before it could be carried out..."

A second factor was the positive development in relations between Turkey and Greece due to the rapprochement between the two neighbors following the catastrophic earthquakes of August 17, 1999. This also had a positive influence on relations between the EU and Turkey.<sup>18</sup> After the earthquake, the EU Commission immediately released 4 millions € for emergency aid and 30 millions € was held ready to support the package in the rehabilitation phase. Furthermore, the Greek and Turkish Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Ismail Cem and Yorgo Papandreou, visited each other within a short space of time. They agreed to establish a new basis for bilateral negotiations and to intensify cooperation on such undisputed issues as tourism, culture, environment and combating organized crime, including illegal immigration, drug trafficking and terrorism. Another important argument for the development of closer relations between Turkey and the EU was that Turkey, especially in the eyes of Washington, was a staunch member of NATO and a close ally. Turkey's integration into the EU has been traditionally supported by both the U.S. and Israel.<sup>19</sup>

The breakthrough in the relations between Turkey and the EU was reached at the Helsinki summit meeting. In October 1999 the European Commission recommended that Turkey should now be considered as a candidate country, but set no date for the opening of accession negotiations at this stage. The European Commission's report emphasized that negotiations could only be opened if Turkey met the Copenhagen criteria in accordance with the annual individual candidate's report. Finally, the European Council followed the recommendations set out and the political leaders of the fifteen member countries decided at the summit meeting in Hel-

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<sup>17</sup>See The General Affairs Council Report on February 21-22, 1999, in: "1999 Regular Report from the Commission on Turkey's Progress toward Accession", 13.10.1999 Brussels: 5-7.

<sup>18</sup>"1999 Regular Report" from the Commission on Turkey's Progress towards Accession," Brussels, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup>Former President of the U.S.A. Bill Clinton, speech delivered in the Turkish Parliament in November 1999: "...there are still those who see Europe in narrower terms. Europe might stop at this mountain range or that body of water or, worse, where people stopped to worship God in a different way...our vision of Europe is that it is undivided, democratic and at peace for the first time in all of history. It will never be complete unless and until it embraces Turkey. The United States is not a member of the Union, but I have consistently urged European integration to move further and faster--and to include Turkey..."

sinki on December 10 and 11, 1999, officially to name Turkey, a country that had been knocking on the EU's door longer than any other outsiders, as a "candidate."

As the Final *Communiqué* agreed in Helsinki stated, "the European Council welcomes recent positive developments in Turkey as noted in the Commission's progress report, as well as its intention to continue its reforms towards complying with the Copenhagen criteria. Turkey is a candidate state destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate states."<sup>20</sup> European leaders at their 2002 Copenhagen summit meeting promised that the EU-15 would open accession negotiations with Turkey, on the basis of "The Progress Report on Turkey 2004" and recommendation from the Commission on October, 6 2004. The EU finally opened membership negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005.

At least publicly, the EU Commission and the EU leaders seemed to be persuaded that Turkey had made sufficient progress on fulfilling the so-called "Copenhagen political criteria" regarding democracy, human rights and legal reforms. By opening the way for Turkey's eventual full membership in the EU, there was a widespread conviction among private and public representatives that this historical decision would bring Ankara closer to realizing one of its most cherished dreams. The European side obviously aimed with its decision to anchor a modern, democratic Turkey in the West and integrate the country fully into Europe in all fields. Furthermore, it was generally argued that the pressure and a positive signal from the EU would offer encouragement to the Turkish government and administration to push ahead with reform, improve its human rights records and lead to comprehensive peace talks with Greece, on such problematic issues as the Aegean Sea and Cyprus.

### 3.2. *Final Act: A Historical Decision and First Step to a Final Decision*

With the EU Commission and the EU leaders persuaded that Turkey had made sufficient progress on fulfilling the so-called "Copenhagen Political criteria," negotiations could begin. The European Parliament also adopted a resolution for the opening of negotiations with Turkey on December 15, 2004.<sup>21</sup> The hope was that now that Turkey had gained full recognition as a member of the European family, it would bring Turkey a step closer to realizing one of its more cherished dreams. With this historical decision by the EU institutions, Turkey's place in the "European House" was, it seemed, confirmed and its participation in the enlargement process justified. However, the decision was just the beginning and a long road lay before Turkey, a road full of surprises and turbulence and various political and economic obstacles.

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<sup>20</sup>Presidency Conclusions, Helsinki European Council, December 10 and 11, 1999.

<sup>21</sup>Here are the reactions of some European politicians; see BBC News, October 4, 2005. Jose Manuel Barroso, head of the European Commission, said: "Today is also a new beginning for Europe and for Turkey... This is not the end of the process. This is the beginning." UK Prime Minister Tony Blair said "the deal showed there was no fundamental clash of civilisations between Christians and Muslims. On the contrary, if [Turkey] fulfills the same principles of human rights, then Muslim and Christian can work together." The U.S. welcomed the breakthrough. Secretary of State Colin Powell said: "A Turkey that is firmly anchored in Europe and sharing European values will be a positive force for prosperity and democracy." However, French President Jacques Chirac stressed that Turkey's membership in the EU was still not guaranteed, and promised the issue would eventually be put to a referendum in France. Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel, who has argued against letting Turkey into the EU, said his country would also hold a referendum. Under the agreement, Turkey must issue a written statement promising to sign an accord extending its customs union to the ten new EU members, including Cyprus.

The following conclusion can be drawn from the summit declaration of October 3, 2005:<sup>22</sup>

- The start sign for negotiations: the most important result was that Turkey gained a fixed date for starting membership negotiations. What is negotiated is “how and when” rather than “what” (and is mainly concerned with transition periods and -- at the end -- financial flows). It is noticeable that until now no country which has begun membership talks has ever been rejected by the EU.
- Shared objective is accession, but an open-ended process? Somewhat against the above, the talks were to be an open-ended process, the outcome of which was not guaranteed beforehand. Neither Article 49 of the EU Treaty, nor the conclusions of the Council in October 2005, nor any other document promises full membership to Turkey. The question arises therefore: what would happen if Turkey were to complete the negotiation process successfully, but was not then accepted as a full member, even after ten or fifteen years? In other words, what if Turkey is ready for membership but the EU is not? The wording in the text gives the impression that the EU has kept the door open for a “privileged partnership,” when the final decision is taken after ten or fifteen years.
- Pace will depend on Turkey’s progress: so far it has been the EU that has decided whether a candidate state would be able to assume all the obligations of membership and it has made continuous efforts to ensure that end in a successful and timely way. In this respect, it is expected Turkey will be treated on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate states.
- Suspension if persistent breach of democratic principles comes about: while the EU did temporarily halt membership negotiations with Slovakia over its breaches of democratic norms, the EU made it explicit that it would suspend negotiations “in the case of a serious and persistent breach in a candidate state of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect of human rights and fundamental reforms and the rule of law on which the union is founded.”
- Accession not before financial report from 2014: The EU warned Turkey that the “financial aspects of accession of a candidate state must be allowed within the applicable Financial Framework “... After the establishment of the Financial Framework for the period from 2014 together with possible consequential financial reforms.” In plain language, Turkey cannot be full member of the EU before 2014, even though the accession negotiations might have been successfully completed.
- Derogations, permanently available safeguards: The EU can consider long transition periods, derogations or safeguard clauses that could be permanently available in sensitive or costly areas such as free movement of persons, regional subsidies or agriculture. Such restrictions could in effect prepare the ground for a “privileged partnership” rather than full membership. A “privileged partnership” is not a well defined concept and little detailed worked has been carried out. It presumably must be some sort of partnership between Turkey and the EU that aims at close cooperation but not full membership. In other words, it is based on the assumption that Turkey can join the EU but without full participation in the EU institutions. Significantly, conservative German and Austrian politicians have brought the issue to

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<sup>22</sup>Riccardo Serri, “EU Enlargement and Turkey’s Accession” (presented by Serri as Power Point at *European Commission. D.G Enlargement*, Brussels, April 19, 2006).

the agenda even during the preliminary negotiations between Ankara and Brussels. There is clearly a fear that the negotiations could be completed successfully, and that therefore Turkey's membership of the EU needs somehow to be stopped.<sup>23</sup> The possibility of 'permanent derogations' to the full liberalization of the four freedoms between Turkey and the rest of the EU would constitute a basic contradiction to the principles of a "Single European Market."

- EU absorption capacity while integration continues: The final condition on which Turkey's membership will rest will be the EU's attitude towards its own absorption capacity. It would seem that even if Turkey was regarded as ready for full membership the member states might still turn around and say "we are not in the position to accept you as member of the Club."<sup>24</sup>
- Cyprus: Although formally not a precondition to starting membership talks, Cyprus became the most sensitive issue at the Council. The EU wanted Ankara to sign a protocol to update Turkey's association agreement with Turkey to cover the 10 newest EU member states. For many, that would have amounted to a *de facto* recognition of the (Greek) Republic of Cyprus. Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos warned that the protocol to agreement- that covers free movement of people and of goods- must be signed and implemented. "If they don't do it, they simply don't continue negotiations"<sup>25</sup>. It is obvious that Nicosia can exercise its veto over the negotiations at every step of the way to membership. The substance of the negotiations, which are formally conducted in an Intergovernmental Conference with the participation of all member states on the one hand and the candidate state on the other, are subject to unanimous agreement. The main question that arises is how Ankara can negotiate entry terms with the twenty-seven EU governments without recognizing one of them.
- Aegean dispute between Greece and Turkey: another crucial point on the agenda is Turkey's relations with Greece over territorial disputes in the Aegean Sea. The European Council "reaffirmed its view that unresolved disputes having repercussions on the accession process, should if necessary be brought to the International Court of Justice for settlement." It seems clear that not only would political issues between Turkey and its neighbors appear on the agenda, but also historical disputes such as the "Armenian question" might be brought up.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4. The Debate on the costs and benefits of Turkey's EU membership

The announcement of Turkey's candidacy provoked different reactions on both sides of the Atlantic. Leading American newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, and the *International Herald Tribune* as well as the U.S. Administration strongly supported Turkey's aim, hoping to ensure their strategically located partner country's full integration into the de-

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<sup>23</sup>Karl Theodor Gutenberg, "Die Beziehungen zwischen der Türkei und der EU- eine Privilegierte Partnerschaft," *Hanns Seidel Stiftung, Aktuelle Analysen* 33 (2004). Wolfgang Schäuble and David L. Phillips, "Talking Turkey," *Foreign Affairs* 83, 6 (November/December (2004).

<sup>24</sup>See Siegfried Schultz and Ulrich Brasche, "The EU's Absorptive Capacity: Key Aspects and Questions," *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen, Analysen, Positionen, Essay*, March (2007): 6-19.

<sup>25</sup>Roy Watson, "Ultimatum may end Turkey EU Hope," *Times on Line*, November 9, 2006.

<sup>26</sup>See Hans-Lukas Kieser and Dominik J. Schaller, eds., *Der Armenische Völkermord und die Shoa* (Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2002).

mocratic West. On the contrary, the declaration substantially divided opinion in Europe, with many reacting with mixed feelings. Some European newspapers and politicians criticized the decision of the European Council harshly and some European politicians disagreed with the decision taken in Helsinki and Brussels.

In the public debate in Turkey and in Europe, the media as well as the politicians began to discuss the wording of the final declaration, in order to understand where Turkey actually stood, and what the main obstacles and preconditions were for full membership. It was a common view that Turkey's membership was a "conditional offer" with "tough conditions," as the Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet* described it. As former Prime Minister of Sweden, Göran Persson, stated: "Turkey must decide whether she wants to become a member. We can invite Turkey, but we ask for compliance with certain conditions."<sup>27</sup> In contrast, the former French President, Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, said that:

France used to have a grand project: the political union of Europe... We have allowed two further enlargements, which are obviously going to transform Europe into a large free trade zone: that's what I regret... I learnt of the news with sadness and surprise... It was said recently that the wishes of citizens are not taken into account sufficiently... The French people said four months ago, we are against Turkey's entry, and here we are, four months later, and it's happening.<sup>28</sup>

The latest debate covers many of the same points that have raised repeatedly over the years. The language sometimes changes but the arguments remain the same. The main argument against the Turkish membership remains Turkey's "otherness"; "... according to its geographical situation, its history, religion, culture and mentality, Turkey does not form part of the Europe."<sup>29</sup>

One well-known politician who is against Turkey's membership in the EU is the former Social Democratic German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt. The former Chancellor argued in his *Selbstbehauptung Europas* (Europe's Self Assertion), published in 2000, that Turkey should not be a member of the European Union. He would seem to have been strongly influenced by the thesis of the "clash of civilizations" presented by Samuel Huntington.<sup>30</sup> Schmidt based his arguments on three main pillars:<sup>31</sup>

- Firstly, there are cultural differences between Turkey and Europe based on two different religions and their historical background.
- Secondly, common EU policies could not be realized with Turkey since Turkey has common borders with and is surrounded by neighbors who are either hostile to Ankara or having various disputes with it.
- Finally, he believes that Turkey will not be able to fulfill the preconditions set by the EU summit in Copenhagen in 1993 in any foreseeable future. Therefore the present

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<sup>27</sup>Frankfurter Rundschau, December 17, 2004.

<sup>28</sup>BBC News, October 4, 2005.

<sup>29</sup>Heinz Kramer, "EU - Kompatibel oder nicht?" *SWP* August 2003, Berlin (2003): 10-14.

<sup>30</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization s and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998).

<sup>31</sup>Helmut Schmidt, "Selbstbehauptung Europas," *DVA Sachbuch* (2000): 219-26.

association and customs union agreements signed between Brussels and Ankara would be sufficient for the EU to live with its Islamic neighbors.

Another bundle of arguments deals with the economic, social and political consequences of membership. Opponents of the Turkish application base their arguments mainly on the status quo and justify the risks and costs, as well as the disadvantages, from the present situation. They suppose that the political, economical and social situation of Turkey will not change much in the near future.

The EU member states have been divided over Turkey's membership for a variety of different economic and political reasons. The discussion has focused unsurprisingly on the possible consequences of Turkey's membership on the EU rather than the impact of its exclusion from the European integration process. For the time being, some member states are in favor of Turkey's membership in the EU; others, despite the beginning of accession negotiations, remain against any attempt that makes Turkey's accession into the EU possible.<sup>32</sup> The arguments in favor and against can be summed up in the following main categories:

#### 4.1. *The main arguments against Turkish membership:*

- Turkey is "different." From historical, cultural and religious points of view, Turkey is not a part of "European Civilization," which is based on ancient Greek and Roman civilizations and Christianity. Therefore, Turkey's membership is not consistent with a "European" identity and the so-called "European Project" and cannot as a result be eligible for membership<sup>33</sup>.
- From geographical point of view Turkey does not belong to Europe; it cannot be regarded as an integral part of European continent and thus should not be included in the EU. N. Tocci has argued that "... those viewing a European identity through culturalist lenses, geographical borders represent an integral element separating and defining 'us' and the 'other'... The EU borders would be determined on the basis of their functional unity in pursuing the Union's interest, defining a European identity and allowing the European polity to live a comfort zone, protected by friendly neighborhood."<sup>34</sup>
- Another aspect that is continuously brought onto the agenda and closely related to European boundaries, is the possible application of North African countries, Ukraine, Moldova and Russia for EU membership. There is a consequentialist argument that if Turkey were to be accepted as a full member of the EU, then the door would be open for other neighboring countries. The argument then continues that such a large number of new member states would negatively affect the functioning of the EU's institu-

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<sup>32</sup>See for a detail discussion on the current issue: Heinz Kramer, "Turkey and the EU: The EU's Perspective," *Insight Turkey* 8, 4 (October and December 2006): 24-32 and Tocci Nathalie ed., "Conditionality, Impact and Prejudice in EU-Turkey Relations," *IAI and tepav*, (2007): 7-32.

<sup>33</sup>See Winkler, Heinrich-August, "Grenzen der Erweiterung. Die Türkei ist kein Teil des 'Projects Europa'," *Internationale Politik*, 58 (February 2003): 59-66. See Wehler Heinz Ulrich, "Das Türken-Problem," *Die Zeit*, September 12, 2002.

<sup>34</sup>See Nathalie Tocci, "Report: Unpacking European Discourses: Conditionality, Impact and Prejudice," *EU-Turkey Relations* (2007): 21.

tions and decision-making processes in Brussels. In plain language, the further enlargement of the EU to include Turkey will make very difficult any further deepening of the EU in the economic and political fields.

- With Turkey's membership the economically poorest country of Europe would be upgraded because of the size of its population to become one of the "big" member states. It would be represented in all of the European institutions at the same level as Germany, France and the United Kingdom, and take a dominating position in institutions and decision-making processes. In other words, Turkey is too big and may thereby gain political ground in order to pursue its own national interests within the EU.<sup>35</sup> One of the main fears is that Turkey's membership would destroy the present political balance between big/small, rich/poor and North/South countries.
- Other important arguments against Turkey's EU membership focus on the economic and social impacts on the EU. It is argued that membership will induce a wave of labor movement from Turkey to EU countries and it will increase the social costs, on the one hand, and lower living standards in the EU on the other, due to differences in Turkish and EU economic stages. In countries like Austria and Germany, which already have large Turkish communities, the numbers of new Turkish workers would take off as new employment opportunities were seized. With this argument "Turkish plumbers" would replace "Polish plumbers" working in the EU.
- Another important concern of Turkey's membership is that Turkey is a poor country with one-third the per capita income level of the EU and would therefore impose costs on the rest of the EU. Although it is not easy to make any predictions on Turkey's impact on the EU's budgetary, cohesion and agricultural policies for the next twenty years, Turkey would likely be a net recipient due to the stage of economic development and size of land and population. Certainly it is generally expected to receive significant financial assistance from the structural, regional and Common Agricultural funds if present policies were to remain unchanged over the next 15-20 years<sup>36</sup>.
- Two contemporary EU leaders, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the French President Nicolas Sarkozy are clearly following a "double strategy" which aims to allow accession negotiations with Turkey to continue on the one hand, even while they are considering alternative strategies to full membership on the other. The "privileged partnership" introduced by Germany and Austria and the concept of a "Mediterranean Union" presented by Sarkozy, into which Turkey might be integrated, would not be acceptable to Turkey.<sup>37</sup> It was made clear by Turkish governments that options other than full membership are not acceptable to Turkey during the accession negotiations. Turkey's aims have focused wholly on full membership rather than any other uncertain and unclear initiatives.

#### 4.2. The main arguments in favor of Turkish membership:

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<sup>35</sup>Müftüler Baç Meltem, "Enlarging the European Union: Where Turkey does stand?" *TESEV* (Istanbul), July (2002): 33-36.

<sup>36</sup>See Dicke Hogo, "Die Beitrittsverträge der EU-eine Bilanzierung," *Institute für Weltwirtschaft Kiel, Working Paper* 1157, Kiel (2003): 12-23.

<sup>37</sup>Andreas Maurer offers besides full membership a broad and interesting spectrum of options. See Maurer Andreas (2003). "Alternatives Required: European Union Membership Policy in the Context of Relations with Turkey", *SWP Comments*, August 17, Berlin.

- One of the most favored arguments put forward by European commentators is the positive impact that Turkey's accession will have on the EU's role in international relations and the global economy. With Turkey as a member, the EU would be closer to the region in which Turkey has already indisputable geostrategic importance. This would help Brussels to establish political and economic bonds that would bring it strategic advantage not only with the countries of the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean region, but also Russia, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. The economic argument is that Turkey is one of the new emerging markets with a very high economic growth rate. The increasing trade relations with the EU and the neighboring countries and a remarkable inflow of FDI could make a vital contribution to the fulfillment of the EU Lisbon agenda and overcome the pressure of increasing economic challenges from the other emerging economic powers such as China and India. Additionally, Turkey's young and increasingly well-educated labor force could help the EU meet not only the serious demographic problem of an increasing ageing population but also to keep the European economy more competitive in international markets.
- Not to be overlooked is Turkey's role as an energy and transport hub. Europe's demand for oil and natural gas can be secured and diversified in transit routes through the supply of energy from the Caucasus, Central Asia and Iran via Turkey to Europe.<sup>38</sup> This will reduce the EU's dependency on unpredictable Russian energy supplies and it will make it easier for European energy companies to be involved in business with the Caspian region and Central Asia. Turkey, as a stable and solid country, which is part of the EU yet at the juncture of Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East, could represent an important safeguard to European interests in the region.
- Another important argument is that the Turkey's accession will help to stabilize its economy and strengthen its democracy within the EU. A democratic and western-oriented Turkey can make two basic contributions to EU. First, the EU could no longer be regarded as a "Christian Club," as the former president of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, once said.<sup>39</sup> It will clearly supply evidence that the EU is a multicultural society. Secondly, the Turkish case could be taken, as a good example by other Muslim societies that Islamic countries can implement Western-type democracy. Islam and democracy can be proved compatible.<sup>40</sup>
- In view of the fact that the European Union is already engaged on the path of accepting Turkey as a full member, only two arguments are left against the application, if the EU does not want to break with its declared policy: first, Turkey cannot fulfill the obligations of the *acquis*, and thus will fall behind expectations. Secondly, the reforms do not prove their efficiency in practice, in which case, the Union would have to wait for the implementation of the reforms. Heinz Kramer wrote:

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<sup>38</sup>See. M. Gareth Winrow, "Pivotal State or Energy Supplicant? Domestic Structure, External Actors, and Turkish Policy in the Caucasus," *Middle East Journal*, 5, 1 (2003): 76-92.

<sup>39</sup>*BBC News*, December 11, 2006.

<sup>40</sup>See Udo Steinbach, "Der EU-Beitritt.Pro: Sicherheitspolitischer Stabilitätsfaktor," *Internationale Politik* (March 11, 2000): 55-8. German Minister of Foreign Affairs, "Debatte in German Bundestag," December 16, 1999.

if the membership of Turkey is effectively not wanted, a politically convincing explanation for it is needed to break away from the political guidelines of European policy towards Turkey over the last 45 years, and which have focused since 1964 on the future membership of Turkey. Such a fundamental change in policy, however, cannot be excluded. It would be necessary to back it legally and politically. The European Union would have to develop a Turkey-policy that is more than a mere rejection of the preceding one.<sup>41</sup>

On the same topic, the Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, in a speech at the University of Helsinki on November 27, 2006, suggested:

the political debate on Turkey runs the risk of undermining the credibility of EU policies towards Turkey. If the Union's right hand lectures Turkey on the Copenhagen criteria arguing that these are the *sine qua non* for EU entry, while the left hand engages in highly politicized and often populist debates over the desirability of Turkey's entry, then the Union's credibility in Turkey risks being seriously undermined.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>See Heinz Kramer, "EU Kompatibel oder nicht?" *SWP Study*, August 2003, Berlin, (2003): 33.

<sup>42</sup>N. Tocci, *ibid.*, p.20

## 5. An assessment

We can draw the following lessons from the past: the development of EU-Turkish relations over the years cannot be described wholly in terms of stable and mutual understanding based on continuity. The political and economic interests of both sides have not overlapped with each other. In other words, from the beginning, Brussels and Ankara have had different objectives and divergent expectations of their cooperation within the framework of Europe's integration process. The old EU members have openly regarded Turkey as a partner but not as an integral part of the European integration process.

- From the EC/EU's point of view, security interests played a dominating role. With the Association Agreement, the EEC intended to anchor Turkey further within the European security sphere. But economic factors had also been important. The 1960s had been a golden age for European economies, which grew rapidly. Since demand for labor had outstripped the growth rate of the population, Turkey had been both a potential future market and a reservoir of manpower. To that end, the Ankara Agreement had included steps for the economic integration of Turkey into the EEC. Ankara had declared the association agreement as political success rather than the beginning of long and complicated economic integration processes.
- The economic policies pursued in Turkey in the 1960s and 70s had been very much at odds with the content of the association agreement. Turkey's trade policy was heavily based on the protection of import substitution industries. This continued uninterrupted for some time, with policymakers in Ankara in no mind to shift their trade strategy from an inward to an outward orientation until 1980; the economy's protection was too comprehensive and too little attention was paid to the possibility of adjusting it to European markets. Because of this inward-oriented development strategy, it is clear that Turkey failed to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the EEC market. They took little note of macroeconomic stability and preferred to follow populist macroeconomic policies that ultimately engendered debt crises and hyperinflation.
- Since the signing of association agreement in 1963, the goals, structure and number of EU member states has changed radically. After the completion of the "Single market" and "European Monetary Union," the EU gave first and urgent priority to realizing political union with all its institutional change and basic values. This profound political development accelerated once the Maastricht Treaty of 1993 entered into force. The Turkish governments and a majority of the Turkish public media appeared unaware of these rapid changes in politics and economic circumstances and seemed unable to catch up with their importance. While these reforms were happening in and around Europe, Turkey remained stuck with a political system and the politicians of the Cold War period.

The following economic and political factors seem to be essential for a full integration of Turkey into the Union:

- To join the EU, three conditions have to be fulfilled, the "Copenhagen Criteria." But the European Council of Copenhagen also included the so-called "integration capacity" of the EU itself. The Lisbon Treaty agreed in December 2007 makes only

indirect reference to the criteria laid down by the European Council but they are to be taken into account in consideration of new members.<sup>43</sup>

- A strong political will and a joint determination of the member states are needed to give Turkey a timetable for full membership. If some member states continue to act reluctantly and hesitantly and play for time, it might be that the interest of the Turkish public would decline – as the latest polls indicate. A new government might feel impelled to look at new alternatives in the region. This could lead step by step to a total separation of Turkey from the European Union. The current discussion in Turkey on the re-islamization of Turkish society, along with the closely related “head scarves” issue, gives some serious indication as to where Turkey’s final destination would be.
- Turkey’s Parliament has approved two constitutional amendments by significant majorities that ease the past ban on women wearing Islamic head scarves in Turkish Universities. The issue has created deep divisions within Turkish society between pro-secularist and anti-secularist groups, which could result in serious political instability. It is argued by secularists that “this step will encourage radical Islamic circles in Turkey, accelerate movement towards a state founded on religion, lead to further demands against the spirit of the republic.”<sup>44</sup> Against this, the Islamist-based governing AK Party and the nationalist MHP say it is an issue of human rights and freedoms. Obviously, we should keep clearly in mind that Turkey is the only Islamic country which practices laicism in spite of the various political fluctuations and tensions that have taken place over the decades, both domestically and internationally. Now one of the fundamental pillars of the secularist state would seem to be breaking up against the challenge from political Islam. A secularist Turkey is already facing serious difficulties in becoming a full member of the EU; an Islamized Turkey might face even more.
- As The Progress Report of 2004 recommends, future EU-Turkey relations will be based on three pillars: the first pillar concerns cooperation to reinforce and support the reform process in Turkey particularly in relation to the continued fulfillment of the Copenhagen political criteria. The second pillar proposes the specific conditions for the conduct of accession negotiations with Turkey. The third pillar suggests a substantially strengthened political and cultural dialogue bringing the people of the EU Member States and Turkey together.

France’s *Le Monde* describes the situation as follows:

...one of the major virtues of the European Union is to encourage applicants to reform, to modernize themselves, to respect the right

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<sup>43</sup>See “Lisbon Treaty” *Fondation Robert Schuman*, Sheet 9, p.22 Lisbon strategy states that

(i)The *membership criteria are not quoted explicitly but reference is made to them* in article 49 TUE: “the criteria of eligibility approved by the European Council are taken into account”

(ii) Candidate states must respect the “*values of the European Union*” (respect of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, Human rights and minorities)

(iii) The candidate state addresses its request to the Council, which decides unanimously. The candidate state now also has to inform the European Parliament and the National Parliaments, but which play no role in the accession procedure however. The Council decides unanimously.”

<sup>44</sup>*BBC News* January 30 and February 7, 2008.

of minorities, to break with hegemonist temptations. There is no reason why this educational virtue should not work with the Turks. For them the choice is very clear: if they meet the conditions set by the EU, they will become full members in 10 or 15 years. It is now up to them to seize this opportunity.<sup>45</sup>

- In the short run the Cyprus issue seems to be the main handicap for Turkey completing negotiations with the EU. On the April 24, 2004, Northern and Southern Cypriots voted in a referendum in order to make a decision on the Annan Plan, which was aimed at rejoining the divided island, which would enter the EU together. To the surprise of many, the Turkish part of Cyprus voted in favor of the Plan and for the reunification of the island, but the Greek part of the island voted against. The Greek part of Cyprus then, nonetheless, entered into the EU as a full member, representing Cyprus as a whole. As a result, the Cyprus issue remains unsolved. It was a major mistake by the EU to accept the Greek part of Cyprus as a full member of the EU without any definitive solution to the Cyprus issue, for the EU has become prisoner of its own politics. As long as the Greek part of Cyprus represents Cyprus as a whole, the European Union is unlikely to be able to make any contributions to resolving the issue along lines similar to those of the Annan Plan – which was after all accepted by Turkish Cypriots.
- If there is no international pressure, especially from the United States, on the Greek part of Cyprus, Nicosia is unlikely to give up its present favored position. Only the United States (and perhaps the United Kingdom) can encourage Greek Cypriots to accept the Annan Plan by improving its economic and political relations with Northern Cyprus without any official recognition, as Washington did concerning the recognition of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) simply as the Republic of Macedonia. As long as present Greek politicians insist on their current policies regarding Cyprus, the Turkish Government will not allow Turkish Cypriots to become a minority within a united Cyprus if Turkey is not a full member of the EU. The newly elected Greek Cypriot president, Demetris Christofias, approached the UN on February 24, 2008, to arrange reunification talks.<sup>46</sup> After so many failures in the past it is a promising beginning perhaps to a new phase.
- The Turkish government declared its willingness to implement the protocol extending the Association Agreement between the EU and Turkey to all ten new member states, if the economic embargo and isolation of Northern Cyprus were lifted by the members of the EU. As long as this did not happen, Ankara refused to allow ships or aircraft from Greek Cyprus to dock in Turkish ports. In the last Enlargement Strategy Paper 2007 prepared by the EU Commission, it was pointed out:<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>December 15, 2004.

<sup>46</sup>“The new president has said that he will immediately request meetings with Mr. Talat and the UN Secretary General, with a view to resuming negotiations.” *BBC News*, Report by Tabitha Morgen (February 24, 2008).

<sup>47</sup>“ Enlargement Strategy 2007,” EU Commission, Brussels, p. 11.

Good neighborly relations remain key. In line with the Declaration of the EU of 21 September 2005 and the Council conclusions of 11 December 2006, Turkey needs to fulfil its obligation of full non-discriminatory implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Ankara agreement and to remove all obstacles to the free movement of goods, including restrictions on the means of transport vis-à-vis the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey is also expected to make progress towards normalization of bilateral relations with the Republic of Cyprus.

The result, however, has been that the EU decided to suspend the talks in eight policy areas or chapters. It also decided that none of the other 27 chapters could be signed off until Turkey opened its ports and airports to Cypriot ships and aircraft. The Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan has insisted that only Greece and Greek Cypriots could solve the Cyprus issue. Ankara believes that at this point, much of the responsibility for continuing the EU accession process lies with the EU rather than with Turkey. Ankara added that the issue of Cyprus should not be linked to its own membership bid.<sup>48</sup>

- The counter arguments to Turkey's full membership to the European Union are as follows: Turkey is different in many ways. It is the biggest, poorest country ever to be invited to start talks, and the most culturally challenging. Obviously, the economic backwardness of Turkey in comparison to the EU is one of the main obstacles and therefore it seems to be reasonable in the long run for Turkey to follow the logic of: on the one hand, moving with uninterrupted vigor to the aim of full membership. On the other hand, it should then have the expectation of economic integration, including membership into the Monetary Union. It is often forgotten that Turkey's political integration into the EU demands a sustainable and stable economic development in the first place - in the spirit of Jean Monnet's concept of political integration through economic integration. Until now Turkey is the only country that joined the Customs Union without being a full member of the European Union. The considerable costs of membership into the customs union shouldered without substantial financial assistance from Brussels.
- The current state of the Turkish economy, with a high economic growth rate but annual inflation at around 10 percent, of a chronic and constantly rising budget deficit, over 6 percent of the GNP against the authorized ceiling in the EU of 3 percent, of an alarming level of internal and external debt, structural and hidden unemployment, a distribution of income developing at the expense of the working population and a reform deficit in public life-compared to the member states, is in a relatively poor position. Thus, the Turkish governments in power have to put their own house in order and continue to enforce and to promote the so-called "Europeanization Process" - restructuring and modernization policies in all realms - constantly. Implementation of EU legislation, norms, standards, and regulations within a secularist state are essential. As long as this does not happen

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<sup>48</sup>See "Hükümetten AB'ye Tepki. (Reaction of Turkish Government to EU)", *Hurriyet. com. tr*, December 12, 2006.

and Turkey is not able to keep its own house in order, Turkey's full membership will remain only a distant possibility.

- When French and Dutch voters rejected the draft treaty establishing a constitution for Europe in 2005, other EU members were shocked. This unexpected decision of the people of two of the founding EU members can be explained by the economic, social, and political shortcomings of the existing EU and its ability to solve their problems. The outcomes of the referenda in both countries have negatively affected the prospect of Turkish membership. Indeed, the constitutional referenda turned enlargement and Turkey's European identity into such a sensitive matter that national governments will no longer be able to bypass public opinion and put Turkey's full membership in a greater jeopardy than before. The French government amended the national constitution with a requirement that after Bulgaria and Romania join the EU, any further enlargement will have to be approved by referendum. That step is more likely to be followed by other member states such as Austria, Holland and Luxembourg.

## **6. Final remarks: Turkey's Membership in the European Union: Swimming against the Tide**

No one can know today whether Turkey will ever become a member. Who, indeed, knows what the EU will look like after fifteen or twenty years? At the same time, Turkey could also take an entirely different route from what is now predicted. Perhaps the next generation in Turkey might not want to join the EU, even if all the criteria have been fulfilled. However, Turkey should bring its "Europeanization/ Westernization process" to its ultimate conclusion.

As the first step of the modernization process, Turkey adopted the so-called French integrationist model, which is based on separation of the state and religious affairs in society. Religion is regarded as an integral part of private life and religious affairs are not admitted in the public sphere. Religious communities are allowed to operate under public law and public order. Among the series of secular measures that were put into force were that the weekend holiday moved from the Islamic holy day to the Christian Sunday and the Gregorian calendar replaced the lunar calendar of Islam. Discrimination against women in public life and public institutions was officially ended and the Swiss civil code replaced the former Islamic legal system. The Islamic education system was abolished and public religious schools were closed in order to safeguard secular education against both preachers and theologians. In taking these measures, the young Republic had a twofold objective. First, they were designed to overcome the backwardness of the country in economic, technical and other fields. Second, it was expected that the political influence of religion could be limited and any return of a political Islam to power could be prevented with help of secularism. How can Turkey, an Islamic country which is itself under fundamentalist threats, play a guiding and leading role for other Muslim countries, as well as be taken as a good example for reformation movement?

We request and expect from the European Union a "fair chance" as other candidate countries in the negotiations process without any prejudices. The success of the struggle for membership will depend on the question of whether Turkey and the European Union are ready to proceed together and resolute in this long and complicated process.

As the former President of Turkey, Turgut Özal, underlined, Turkey's EU membership is a long and rocky way full of surprises. Certainly, Ankara and Brussels have much work to do until Turkey becomes a full member of the European Union.