

On Turkey's Inclusion in EU Enlargement: An Asset Or A Liability?

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Abstract

In December 2004, the European Union (EU) will decide whether or not to open accession negotiations with Turkey. Of the countries involved in the 2004 enlargement of the EU, Turkey remains the only contested applicant that has not yet been able to acquire a date for the start of the accession negotiations. This is despite Turkey having first applied to join the then EEC about 45 years ago. In this respect, the Turkish case is deemed to be extremely important in assessing the enlargement rationale of the EU. This article analyses the justification of EU enlargement in general and with respect to Turkey and tries to judge whether Turkey is an asset or a liability regarding the enlargement policies of the EU. The study concludes that the justification for including Turkey in this enlargement process has not followed a consistent pattern during these four decades and that the asset/liability assessment can only be understood by taking into account a number of other factors in addition to the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria.

Introduction

The December 2004 European Council will make a critical decision whether or not to open accession negotiations with Turkey. This is going to be a critical turning point for Turkey-EU relations in general. However, the decision will also act as a mirror for the EU itself, which will finally be forced to define what it is, where its borders end, what kind of norms and values it upholds and how it will justify its decision.

This study tries to analyse Turkey-EU relations from the perspective of EU enlargement policies and prioritisation. The enlargement decision is seen as a foreign policy tool on the part of the EU and this study therefore tries to examine the rationale behind the enlargement decision to include Turkey. This will be done first by looking at the *raison d'être* of European integration at its inception, and the evolution of the enlargement rationales of the EU in the past and present with respect to the formation and evolution of the norms, interests and value-based judgements and criteria employed by the EU. That is, the study will try to reveal

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how EU enlargement criteria have been shaped over time. Then, in the second part, the article will examine how the evolving enlargement rationale and criteria of the EU has affected the case of Turkey. In other words, the study tries to focus on the Turkish case within the framework of the assessments made by the EU to include or exclude Turkey from the enlargement scheme both in the past and the present.

The Raison d'être of Past and Present EU Enlargements

The European Union (EU), or the then European Economic Community (EEC), was born out of the ashes of the Second World War with a basic philosophy in the mind of its founders: to establish a peaceful environment in Europe by preventing wars, through binding European states to each other by economic bonds that could not be easily eradicated. The EEC, which began its existence with six member states - France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg - aimed primarily at an economic integration which would eventually lead to political integration, in the hope of creating an area of peace and prosperity in Europe.¹ Thus European integration would mean partial transfer of national sovereignties to a supranational body.

The basic condition for membership - European identity - was set out in the 1958 Rome Treaty. Article 237 reads "Any European state may apply to become a member of the Community." However, it is important to note that the evolution of the EEC was taking place in a Cold War atmosphere which put Europe under pressure to unite and behave as an international actor. This meant Cold War eligibility was not such a troublesome issue, as membership for states outside the Western half of the continent was unthinkable.² Under these conditions, the EEC carried out its first enlargement to include three new members - Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark.

It was not until the mid-1970s that membership conditions became a matter of concern. In April 1978, the European Council declared that "respect for and maintenance of representative democracy and human rights in each Member State are essential elements of membership in the European Communities."³ The reason for this declaration was the democratisation problem of potential south European members. The possibility of a southern enlargement had come for the first time with Greece's application to join the EC in 1959. Greece signed an association

¹ John Mc Cormick, *Understanding the European Union. A Concise Introduction*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 1999, p. 13.

² Helene Sjursen and Karen E. Smith, "Justifying EU Foreign Policy: the Logics Underpinning EU Enlargement", ARENA Working Papers, WP 01/1, found at website http://www.arena.uio.no/publications/wp01_1.htm, p. 6.

³ *Ibid.*

agreement in 1961, but between 1967 and 1974, Greece was governed by a military regime. During this period, the EC suspended the association agreement with Greece. By suspending the agreement, the EC imposed a sanction on Greece which would continue unless democracy was restored in the country. With this attitude towards Greece, the EC revealed its future policy towards other applicants for membership, by stressing the existence of a democratic regime as the first condition of being an EC member. Having understood this condition, Greece applied for membership in 1975 soon after the restoration of democracy in 1974. However, in 1976, the European Commission reported that it was against Greek membership as Greece was seen to be lacking certain economic and political conditions necessary for EC membership. Nevertheless, the Council favoured the application and, in 1976, the accession negotiations began which resulted in Greece's joining the EC in 1981.

It is important to note how the perceptions of various European leaders shaped the decision for enlargement to include Greece. At an intellectual level Greece was seen as the ancient source of European civilisation, and so deserving of privileged treatment within the union in its drive to re-establish democracy.⁴ In other words, because of some historical perceptions, notwithstanding Greece having many deficiencies with respect to the economic and political requisites of the EC, it was regarded as having the potential to reform. Thus, Greece began negotiations for membership almost immediately after first applying. In fact, the EC had also had political motives in accepting the Greek application, in that it formed the basis of the EC's Mediterranean policy at that time, which also affected the way in which the EC welcomed the applications of Spain and Portugal which came right after the Greek application. It is important to note that what became obvious with the southern enlargement was that "the importance of democracy as a basis for membership at this stage of the community's history was an important signal that it was not just an economic integration project and that deeper values than economics linked the member states."⁵ This provided the justification for this stage of enlargement.

The negotiations of accession for Portugal began in 1978 and for Spain in 1979. Portugal and Spain applied for membership despite the existence of the EEC Treaty stating that democracy is a precondition for membership⁶ Although these countries lacked stable democratic institutions, the EC started negotiations with

⁴James Pettifer, "Greek Political Culture and Foreign Policy," in N. Featherstone and K. Infantis eds. *Greece in a changing Europe: Between European Integration and Balkan Disintegration*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1996, p.18.

⁵Sjursen and Smith, "Justifying EU Foreign Policy: the Logics Underpinning EU Enlargement", p. 7.

⁶McCormick, *Understanding the European Union*, p. 60.

them. This reveals the EC's desire to assist the consolidation of democracy in the Mediterranean countries. As Preston points out, the third enlargement was a "test of the capability of the EC model to act as a stabilising influence in the region and to establish a framework for the development of pluralist political and economic structures and processes"⁷. For this reason, although these countries had a long way to go to meet the political criteria of democratisation for EC membership and their accession would create many economic problems because of the competition especially with France, of agricultural products in the Mediterranean region, the EC began entry negotiations with Spain and Portugal as a part of its Mediterranean policy. This policy aimed to make the community an international political actor which would have a positive effect regarding the establishment and consolidation of democratic institutions in the region.⁸

While eligibility for membership was easily decided on the part of the EU during the Cold War period, things became complicated in the post-Cold War era. While the EU was preparing itself for deepening rather than widening with the 1986 Single European Act and the 1989 Delors Report on Economic and Monetary Union, unforeseen developments occurred with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist bloc. The 1990s saw the EC facing a difficult situation as the newly-emerging post-Communist states of Central and Eastern Europe applied for membership. Together with these countries, two other small Mediterranean states - Malta and Cyprus - as well as EFTA members as - Sweden, Austria and Finland - expressed their willingness to become an EU member.

The queue of applicants could endanger the deepening process of the EU and the only way out was to set out more comprehensive membership criteria. Therefore, in a report to the June 1992 Lisbon European Council, the Commission stated that in addition to the three basic conditions for membership: European identity, democratic status and respect of human rights, the applicants had to accept the *acquis communautaire* and be able to implement it. The primary aim was to prevent opt-outs. The applicants were expected to be contributing to the single European market, the single currency and the common foreign and security policy. Thus, the Commission was in fact trying to set out clearly that the "enlargement should not be at the expense of deepening."⁹ In other words, we can see it as a natural reflex to protect what the EU had been trying to achieve until then. As Sjursen and Smith put it "enlargement could be justified only if it contributed to, or

⁷ Christopher Preston, *Enlargement and integration in the European Union*, London, New York, Routledge 1997, p. 63.

⁸ Ayşe Aslıhan Çelenk, *Military and Democracy in Turkey and Algeria : the success or failure of the EU's Mediterranean policy*, unpublished Masters Thesis, Bilkent University, 2003, Chapter 2 , p.

⁹ Sjursen and Smith, "Justifying EU Foreign Policy: the Logics Underpinning EU Enlargement", p.7.

at least, did not threaten, the ongoing process of integration agreed at Maastricht."¹⁰

What became known as the Copenhagen criteria was just a reiteration of the principles stated above. The 1993 Copenhagen European Council declared that those Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) that had concluded a Europe Agreement were eligible for EU membership, provided that they could meet three conditions: "Membership requires that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Membership presupposes the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union."¹¹

Since the Copenhagen summit, the EU has made more general definitions of the membership criteria. For instance, Article 6 of the Amsterdam Treaty states that "the Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member states." Article 49, states "Any European state that respects these principles may apply to become a member of the Union." Another condition that has been added is that of 'good neighbourliness', i. e. the willingness to cooperate with neighbours. The 1999 Helsinki Summit of the European Council required "peaceful settlement of border disputes in accordance with the United Nations Charter." Thus, it can be argued that one of the EU's core legitimating values is the development of a peaceful community entailing reconciliation between former enemies.¹² Although the EU presented these norms and values as political conditionality regarding the applicant states, it nevertheless did not apply them consistently - as the recent enlargement to include Cyprus without solving its border dispute has revealed.

Thus European norms and values have evolved over time without exhibiting a consistent pattern. For instance, the justification of enlargements was quite different in the Cold War period than in the post-Cold War period. One important example of how enlargement justifications have been applied in a contested case is Turkey. In the next section, this article tries to elaborate on the Turkish case within the enlargement justification framework that has been outlined so far.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 8.

¹¹Copenhagen European Council Presidency Conclusions, June 1993.

¹²Sjursen and Smith, "Justifying EU Foreign Policy: the Logics Underpinning EU Enlargement", p. 11.

The Raison d'Etre of Including Turkey in the Enlargement Scheme

Turkey occupies a distinct, even extraordinary geopolitical location between three different continents (Asia, Europe and Africa), three different political systems (Europe's liberal democracy, the post-communist former Soviet states and Middle Eastern authoritarianism), and two different religions (Islam and Christianity). This has often inflamed the debate about the geopolitical image of the country and about whether Turkey is a bridge or a barrier between these different geopolitical realms. The Cold War period reinforced Turkey's European vocation even more due to the Soviet Communist threat. Turkey sided from the very beginning with the western world and became a member of most of the western security and economic institutions, such as the Western European Union, the Council of Europe, the United Nations and NATO.

Turkey was part of the EU's enlargement scheme from the very beginning. It had applied to the then European Economic Community, the EEC as early as July 1959 and signed the association agreement - the Ankara Agreement - on 12 September 1963. This agreement, which came into force on 1 December 1964, aimed to secure Turkey's full membership through the establishment, in three phases, of a customs union which would serve as an instrument to bring about integration between the EEC and Turkey. The Ankara Agreement envisaged the progressive establishment of a Customs Union which would bring the Parties closer together in economic and trade matters.¹³ In the meantime, the EEC would offer financial assistance to Turkey. The Ankara Agreement still constitutes the legal basis of the association between Turkey and the EU.¹⁴

The Additional Protocol of 13 November 1970 set out in a detailed manner how the customs union would be established.¹⁵ In other words, until the end of the 1970s, it was quite clear what steps Turkey should take to become an EC member country. However, the domestic situation in Turkey, the stalemate in the decision-making mechanisms of the EC – the so-called 'Eurosclerosis', and the international economic crisis following OPEC's oil embargo slowed down the further development of Turkey-EU relations. Relations were then frozen following the military coup d'état of 12 September 1980 in Turkey. Only after the multiparty elections of 1983 did relations between Turkey and the Community begin returning to normality.

However, even with the restoration of democracy in Turkey, the 1980s

¹³For a detailed history of Turkey-EU relations, see <http://www.mfa.gov.tr>

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid

were the years in which the roads of the EC and Turkey started to diverge. Turkey applied for full membership in 1987, on the basis of the EEC Treaty's Article 237 which gave any European country the right to do so. The Commission's Opinion was completed on 18 December 1989 and endorsed by the Council on 5 February 1990. It stated that "it would be inappropriate for the Community - which is itself undergoing major changes while the whole of Europe is in a state of flux - to become involved in new accession negotiations at this stage." It continued that "furthermore, the political and economic situation in Turkey leads the Commission to believe that it would not be useful to open accession negotiations with Turkey straight away."¹⁶ The Opinion seemed to imply that Turkey would be a liability rather than an asset at that specific historical conjuncture.

The changing international dynamics with the collapse of the Soviet Union proved to be a turning point for the EU's relations with Turkey in that the changing enlargement priorities of the EU did not correspond to Turkey's increasingly determined bid for European membership. Sjursen and Smith argue that the new Copenhagen Criteria for membership, named after the Copenhagen European Council of 1993, primarily addressed the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs), and were not specifically intended for Cyprus, Malta or Turkey, which had applied for membership in 1990, 1990 and 1987, respectively. Yet these criteria have come to be understood as forming the basic conditions for these applicants.¹⁷

The broadening and hardening of the membership criteria have prompted a reassessment of Turkey's association with the EU by both parties and have made it more difficult for Turkish politicians to claim that the customs union is a means to achieve full membership.¹⁸

At almost the same time as the EU was expanding to include the three EFTA countries, Austria, Finland and Sweden, Turkey was about to complete the customs union with the EU. The Customs Union talks that began in 1994 were finalised on 6 March 1995 at the Turkey-EU Association Council. While the Turkish leaders of the time were very satisfied following the completion of the Customs Union, they could not foresee that it would not prove to be a significant step towards the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey. Thus although Turkey welcomed this development quite enthusiastically, the EU was following a different agenda - trying to formulate ways to integrate the newly-independent

¹⁶ Commission of the European Communities, Commission Opinion on Turkey's Request for Accession to the Community,

¹⁷ Brussels, 20 December 1989.

¹⁸ Sjursen and Smith, "Justifying EU Foreign Policy: the Logics Underpinning EU Enlargement", p. 9.

countries with the rest of western Europe.

At the last Association Council of 29 April 1997, the EU reconfirmed Turkey's eligibility for membership and asked the Commission to prepare recommendations to deepen Turkey-EU relations, while claiming that the development of this relationship depended on a number of factors relating to Greece, Cyprus and human rights. The Commission, however, excluded Turkey from the enlargement process in its report entitled 'Agenda 2000' which it released on 16 July 1997. While the report conceded that the Customs Union was functioning satisfactorily, and that it had demonstrated Turkey's ability to adapt to the EU norms in many areas, it repeated the same political and economic arguments against Turkey's membership and made no reference to Turkey's full membership objective. On the same day as Agenda 2000, the Commission released a 'Communication' to enhance relations with Turkey. In this, it reconfirmed Turkey's eligibility and listed a number of recommendations, ranging from liberalisation of trade in services to consumer protection, that aimed at taking Turkey-EU relations beyond the Customs Union. It also, however, cited a number of political issues as pre-conditions for moving these relations forward.¹⁹

Despite these developments, the December 1997 Luxembourg European Council produced the effect of a 'slap in the face' for Turkey. At this summit, however, despite the completion of the Customs Union, Turkey was not even included in the list of the candidate countries with whom accession negotiations could start. It was decided that membership negotiations would begin in 1998 with Cyprus, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia. At the same time, preparations for negotiations with Romania, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria would be speeded up. In a separate paragraph of the Conclusions, it was stated that, although the political and economic conditions allowing accession negotiations to be envisaged had not been satisfied, it was still important to draw up a strategy to prepare Turkey for membership. As a reaction to the EU decision, Turkey did not participate in the inaugural meeting of the European Conference held in London on 12 March 1998. Turkey thus made it clear that in its view the way out of this difficult moment in bilateral relations depended on the political will to be displayed by the EU.

The Commission published its recommendations for a 'European Strategy' on 4 March 1998. Its contents were more or less similar to the former packages which the EU had promised but failed to deliver in the past. Moreover, the

¹⁹ <http://www.mfa.gov.tr>

ambiguity over how this package would be financed prevented Turkey from being optimistic about its chances of being put into effect soon. The Commission itself conceded that the implementation of this package would require considerable financial resources. In the statement issued by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs following the Cardiff Summit, the contrast between the pre-accession strategy devised for the other candidates and the 'European Strategy for Turkey', which consisted simply of a set of ideas whose financing remained uncertain was underlined. In this way, Turkish officials also stressed the fact that Turkey would not accept the subjection of its candidacy to additional political pre-conditions.²⁰

It was not until the Cologne European Council, held on 3-4 June 1999 that some positive signals started to come from the EU regarding Turkey's candidacy, as the German Presidency mentioned for the first time the necessity to ensure the recognition of Turkey's candidate status on an equal footing with the others. However, the objections of some EU member states prevented this initiative from being realised. As a consequence, the EU refrained from taking a decision to include Turkey in the accession process and the discriminatory approach towards Turkey concerning the recognition of its candidate status remained unchanged at the Cologne Summit.

The tide only turned fully in the late 1990s, when the recognition of Turkey as a candidate for accession at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 opened a new page in relations between Turkey and the EU. At Helsinki, Turkey was officially recognised without any precondition as a candidate state on an equal footing with the other candidate states. In this way, Turkey, like other candidate states, would reap the benefits from a pre-accession strategy to stimulate and support its reforms. This would also include an Accession Partnership, combined with a National Program for the adoption of the *acquis*. Turkey would now participate in Community programmes open to other candidate countries and agencies, and be invited to meetings between candidate states and the Union in the context of the accession process. A single framework for coordinating all sources of EU financial assistance for pre-accession would also be created.

Atila Eralp argues that the reason for this change in the EU's attitude emanated from the EU rather than from Turkey and was not a coincidence.²¹ According to him, the reasons why Turkey began to be seen as an asset rather than a liability are various: a. the change of the German government from Christian

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Atila Eralp, "Turkey in the Enlargement Process: From Luxembourg to Helsinki," *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 5, No: 2, June-August 2000, found at website <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/percept/V-2/aeralp/htm>, p. 10.

Democrats to a Social Democrat-Green Party coalition; b. the EU Commission manifesting a greater awareness of the strategic dimension of enlargement, especially after the Kosovo crisis; c. a growing awareness of the dangers of potential conflict between Greece and Turkey; d. the tragic earthquake which brought the Greek and Turkish public closer; e. the EU's decision to create military forces of up to 50-60,000 to conduct EU-led operations in response to international crises.²² These factors meant Turkey would be an indispensable country in this scheme of EU interests.

Since then Turkey has been recognised as a candidate for membership and is included within the enlargement framework of the EU. During the period between the Helsinki summit in 1999 and the Copenhagen European Council of 2002, Turkey prepared its National Programme and started a serious reform process to comply with the Copenhagen criteria discussed above, which from then on constituted the major yardstick for Turkey's progress towards EU membership. Due to this reform process, Turkish state-society relations underwent major changes.

It is also important to note that Turkey was taking a serious part in the enlargement scheme of the EU as time proceeded. The Laeken European Council of 14-15 December 2001 had important implications for EU-Turkey relations in general and the accession process in particular. Turkey would begin to take part in the Convention on the Future of Europe on an equal basis with the other candidates. This was seen as a progressive step in the sense that Turkey was considered part of the Union's common future.²³

In the European Commission's fifth annual Progress Report released on 9 October 2002 and in the Strategy Paper, the political reforms realised in Turkey were judged to be a fundamental step towards meeting the Copenhagen criteria. The issues concerning the alignment with economic criteria and the Community *acquis* were also judged in a generally satisfactory manner from Turkey's perspective. Nevertheless, the Regular Report concluded that Turkey had not yet fully met the political criteria, that there were deficiencies in implementation and that further progress needed to be recorded in all areas.

Despite the speedy reform process adopted by the Justice and Development Party government that came to power on 3 November 2002, Turkey was not able to obtain a date for the start of the accession negotiations at the Copenhagen European Council of December 11-12, 2002. This meeting was a major turning point in the

²² Eralp, "Turkey in the Enlargement Process: From Luxembourg to Helsinki," p. 10-11.

²³ <http://www.mfa.gov.tr>

enlargement of the EU since the ten candidate countries (Poland, Hungary, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Cyprus) were granted membership status and due to become full members by 1 May 2004. The prospective date for the 'acceding countries', namely Bulgaria and Romania, seemed to be 2007. Turkey was the only country among the thirteen candidates not to be granted membership status or an exact date for the start of accession negotiations.

It was only stated at the Copenhagen Summit that "the Union encourages Turkey to pursue energetically its reform process," although what was critically important was the additional statement that "If the European Council in December 2004, on the basis of a report and a recommendation from the Commission, decides that Turkey fulfills the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union would open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay.²⁴ In order to assist Turkey towards EU membership, the accession strategy for Turkey would be strengthened and the Commission was invited to submit a proposal for a revised Accession Partnership and to intensify the process of legislative scrutiny. In parallel, the EC-Turkey Customs Union would be extended and deepened, and the Union would significantly increase its pre-accession financial assistance for Turkey.²⁵

The Brussels European Council meeting in June 2004 reaffirmed its commitment that if the European Council decided in December 2004, on the basis of a report and recommendation from the Commission, that Turkey had fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria, the EU would open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay. This was a critical statement on the part of the EU leaders and a lively debate regarding assessment of Turkey as an asset or liability for Europe followed. It seemed that it would continue until the European Council meeting in December 2004, which would definitely mark a critical turning point in Turkey-EU relations.

Is Turkey an Asset or a Liability for the EU?

As the above account demonstrates, relations between Turkey and the EU have evolved over a long period of time. The choice and prioritisation of enlargements have been shaped both by factors intrinsic to the EU itself as well as by factors intrinsic to the applicant countries. In this respect, the case of Turkey has not been an exception. At certain times, Turkey has been considered an asset for the EU, and a liability in some other periods. Nevertheless, it is not wrong to argue

²⁴ Copenhagen European Council Presidency Conclusions, 11-12 December 2002.

²⁵ Ibid.

that Turkey has always been important for Europe in strategic terms, as it has been seen both as a bridge and a barrier to the Middle East. This was especially the case during the first years of the Cold War period, when Turkey had clearly sided with the Western world and took part in leading economic and security institutions in the west. Thus, Turkey's application to the EEC was welcomed by most European states of the time.

However, the essence of the problem is not whether Turkey is an asset or a liability for the EU in general. Rather, this assessment should be made with respect to different time periods. Suzannah Verney has stated that "Turkey's relationship with the EC/EU has been one of bad timing."²⁶ It is important that both the EU and Turkey have synchronised mutual interests at any given time. However, this synchronisation of mutual interests has not been at times possible in the past, when either Turkey or the EU was not interested in including Turkey in EU enlargement.

As discussed above, in the 1970s, the EU was very much interested in including Turkey into its enlargement scheme together with Greece, since the EC was aware of the fact that the geopolitical balance between these two NATO countries and neighbours was very delicate. Taking one inside while leaving the other outside would upset this balance. However, the EC's warm approach to Turkey's membership was not welcomed by the governments of that time. In addition, Turkey was dealing with extensive domestic problems which culminated in the 12 September 1980 military coup d'état.

The 1980s were also years when relations between the EU and Turkey were not based on mutual synchronisation of interests. With the launching of the Single European Act in 1986, the EU was rejuvenated after a long period of ineffectiveness in the 1960s and 1970s. From then on, the EU accelerated its deepening process as well as its widening, as the enlargements discussed above demonstrated. Although Turkey was quite busy at this time with a retransition to democracy, it nevertheless applied to the EU for membership in 1987. However, the application was left in limbo due to the EU's other priorities at this time - the completion of the Common Market by 1992. Thus the Avis (Opinion) released in 1989 stated that "at that point Turkey's membership would not be justifiable either to the European leaders themselves or to the European public.

²⁶Suzannah Verney, "Creating the democratic tradition of European integration: The south European Catalyst" in Helene Sjursen ed. *Enlargement and Finality of the EU*, ARENA Report No: 7/2002, 2002, cited in Asa Lundgren, "Prioritisations in the Enlargement Process: Are Some candidates more "European" than Others?" Paper presented at the Workshop on Justifying Enlargement: Past and Present Experiences-a Principled Account, Avila, 7-8 May 2004, found at website <http://www.arena.uio.no/cidel/WorkshopMadrid/Lundgren.pdf>, p. 5.

The post-Cold War environment made Turkey a paradoxical and contested case in the eyes of EU member states, whose priorities completely changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the newly-democratising Central and Eastern European countries. The "kinship-based duty", as Helene Sjursen terms it, to return the "kidnapped West" back to Europe was the EU's overriding concern, which explains why the CEE was prioritised over Turkey.²⁷ In many speeches and official statements, the accession of the CEE into the Union has been described as Europe's "other half finally coming home", as the existing EU members and the ex-communist states are said to share the same past, have the same roots and understand one another, while this was not the case with Turkey.²⁸ Jan Zielonka argues that "in addition to material gains, enlargement was also a means of asserting the EU's 'imperial control' over the less-stable eastern parts of the continent."²⁹ In addition to all these considerations, Turkey did not have a patron-client relationship with any of the member states, as for instance Poland did with Germany³⁰.

In the context of interest-based explanations for EU enlargement, it can also be argued that the post-Cold War international order made Turkey be perceived as something of a liability in the eyes of many European states. This value-based approach of the EU and the leapfrogging of the CEECs posed additional difficulties to Turkey's European bid. The concern for regional disparities and a possible allocation of structural funds to Turkey, and the possible weight of Turkey in EU decision-making after the enlargement, were among other factors rendering Turkey a liability in the eyes of some EU member states.

It is also important to note that the European leaders have to take into account European public opinion and be able to justify enlargement to include Turkey. This is a real challenge since European public opinion is not well-informed about Turkey and there are certain prejudices because of historical, religious, cultural and economic reasons. Thus, the course of EU-Turkey relations is determined to a great extent by what Müftüler-Baç calls "a two-level game"³¹ played

²⁷ Helene Sjursen, "Why Expand? The question of justification in the EU's Enlargement Policy" ARENA Working Papers WP 01/6, found at website http://www.arena.uio.no/publications/wp01_6.htm, p. 14.

²⁸ Asa Lundgren, "Prioritisations in the Enlargement Process: Are Some candidates more "European" than Others?" Paper presented at the Workshop on Justifying Enlargement: Past and Present Experiences-a Principled Account, Avila, 7-8 May 2004, found at website <http://www.arena.uio.no/cidel/WorkshopMadrid/Lundgren.pdf>, p. 10.

²⁹ Jan Zielonka, "Europe moves Eastward. Challenges of EU Enlargement," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 15, No: 1, January 2004, p. 23.

³⁰ Meltem Müftüler-Baç and Lauren M. McLaren, "Enlargement Preferences and Policy-Making in the European Union: Impacts on Turkey," *European Integration*, Vol. 25, 2003, p. 28.

³¹ Meltem Müftüler-Baç, "Turkey in the EU's Enlargement Process: Obstacles and Challenges," *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 7, No: 2, Summer 2002), p. 87.

by the EU. On the lower level, within each member state, there is always a bargaining process between different social groups. On the higher level, ie. the EU level, there will be a bargaining process between members over opening accession negotiations with Turkey, or not, and consequently, EU policy will be determined by the relative power of the member states. Therefore, in addition to factors intrinsic to Turkey, the outcome of the European Council meeting in December 2004 will be affected by the policy preferences of the member states and their capacity to influence EU policy towards Turkey.

One of the most important factors in assessing EU's enlargement towards Turkey is the decision-making process of the EU. The decision-making mechanism in the EU is important to be able to understand the influence of different member states on a final decision regarding Turkey's position vis-a-vis the EU. The Progress Reports prepared by the Commission play an important role in shaping the decision of the European Council which is composed of the Prime Ministers of the member states and which has a more intergovernmental character. The European Council, taking into consideration the view of the Commission, reaches an ultimate decision which is generally highly political in nature. The decisions regarding enlargement are taken in the European Council and are declared as Conclusions of the relevant Presidency. The decision regarding enlargement is taken by unanimous voting, which renders each and every member state's vote crucial in determining the outcome of the decision. Unanimity is required for decisions relating to crucial areas such as taxation, social security, defence and enlargement. In these areas, Member States are allowed to use a veto³². The use of veto in decisions regarding enlargement has been a very important factor that has posed a challenge in the Turkish case.

While assessing Turkey-EU relations, it is also important not to perceive the EU as a monolithic Union. There are differing views among the member states on Turkey's membership to the Union. The main supporters in Europe of Turkey's EU membership have been Germany, United Kingdom, Spain and Italy. France, Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden appear reluctant to offer support and several new member states remain opposed to Turkey joining the Union. When asked in an interview what would happen in the case of an EU refusal to start accession negotiations for Turkey, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer stated: "It would feel insecure between the options of a Western orientation, its Islamic tradition and would in addition be isolated in a difficult environment. Reforms would stagnate. The situation for people in Turkey would not improve, and we would have lost the

³² For more details on the EU decision-making process, see the website <http://www.eu2004.ie/templates/standard.asp?sNavlocator=6,27,122>

unique chance of firmly anchoring this biggest of all Muslim countries, Turkey, in Europe at the hub between Europe and the Middle East and to unite democracy and Islam in an open and strong civil society on the basis of Islamic tradition."

Thus, in the context of norm-based explanations, Turkey has been considered as an 'odd case' as it does not fit any pattern of inclusion. Turkey's large Muslim population and its non-European historical background are taken to imply that Turkey belongs to a different civilisation and cannot be a part of Europe. This view was particularly evident in the words of the Head of the Convention, Valerie Giscard d'Estaing, who said "Turkey must never be allowed to join the European Union ... since it has a different culture, a different approach, a different way of life." This was very much resented in Turkey. D'Estaing was unambiguous on the issue of EU membership and stated that "Turkey is a country that is close to Europe, an important country ... but it is not a European country ... Its capital is not in Europe, 95% of its population are outside."³³ His words can be seen as the best indicator of how some Europeans still perceive Turkey. As Şaban Çalış puts forward, "the issue of identity has always been very important in the debates concerning EU-Turkey relations since the beginning in 1959"³⁴ and it seems that "religion, culture and civilisation will continue to remain as an 'unspoken assumption' and will appear on the agenda from time to time."³⁵

One can ask the question where the United States stands in this picture. It is also important to mention the US factor in the relations. Turkey counts as a key ally for the US, and thus the US believes that the EU should take in Turkey as a full member. For the US, Turkey's EU membership would create a stable role model for the whole Islamic world. The post-cold war period revealed the fact that there are huge differences in the European and American perceptions of Turkey's role. As Bağcı and Çalış puts it "the EU was evaluating Turkey from political, historical and economical perspective" and that was very different from the perception of the US who looked at the issue from a strategic point of view. Although the EU did not want to let Turkey go away, they seemed to be determined to resist Turkey's membership as much as possible.³⁶ Bağcı and Çalış argue that "in such a case, the EU would have to extend its frontiers to the region and would be directly involved in the conflicts of the regional states and warlords, in addition to Turkey's economical problems."³⁷

³³The Guardian, 9 November 2002

³⁴Şaban Çalış, AB-Türkiye İlişkileri: Kimlik Arayışı, Politik Aktörler ve Değişim (Ankara: Nobel: 2001), pp. 395-96.

³⁵Ibid., p. 11.

³⁶Hüseyin Bağcı and Şaban Çalış, "The Issue of Turkey's Membership in the EU: Conditions and Debates since the end of the Cold War," in G. Erdödy ed. Transformationserfahrungen (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2003), p. 254.

³⁷Ibid.

It is also no coincidence that the countries which supported the US invasion of Iraq are the supporters of Turkey's membership to the EU. For instance, the United Kingdom thinks that the EU would benefit greatly from integrating a country with such enormous potential - a key NATO ally at the intersection of the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus. Poland, which joined the EU as a full member on 1 May 2004, has been wary that Turkey, once accepted into the EU club, would draw massive subsidies and would also be way too big a country for the Union to swallow. Nevertheless, Warsaw has also repeatedly expressed full support for Turkey's EU membership bid.³⁸

Some Highlights on the 2004 Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament:

The most recent Progress Report and the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament dated 6 October 2004 is quite important in shaping the ultimate decision of the European Council convenes in December 2004. The Communication and the Progress Report make an asset/liability assessment regarding Turkey's membership to the EU and addresses the issues arising from Turkey's membership perspective. The Communication can also be regarded as a recommendation of the European Commission on Turkey's progress towards accession and a more concise version of the Progress Report. Therefore, it is deemed important to examine the Communication to have an idea of what the Commission concludes from the Progress Report on Turkey.

The Commission has stated that assessing the issues raised by Turkey's possible accession is faced with some uncertainties that stem from Turkey and the EU respectively and summarises them under four main headings:

The future evolution of EU policies and the degree of deepening; Economic and structural developments both in Turkey and in the EU during the next decade, as well as some extrinsic factors such as energy prices and international economic circumstances; the evolution regarding the decision-making in the EU after expanding to 27 members; the timing and scope of the future enlargement process towards the Western Balkan countries which were given the EU membership perspective.³⁹

³⁸ Justus Leicht, "European Union agrees on terms for membership negotiations with Turkey," found at website <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2004/dec2004/turk-d23.shtml>, 23 December 2004.

³⁹ Commission of the European Communities, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Recommendation of the European Commission on Turkey's Progress towards Accession, Brussels, 6 October 2004, p. 2.

Having stated that, the Commission later on implies that these uncertainties will mostly not act as an obstacle on the way to Turkey's ongoing negotiations and possible membership and continues with the assessment of challenges and opportunities in the field of politics, economics and other related policy areas as internal market, agriculture, regional policy, and justice and home affairs.

Political Assessment:

The Commission praises the reform process in Turkey and states that "there has been substantial legislative and institutional convergence in Turkey towards European standards, in particular after the 2002 elections. The political reforms are mainly contained in two major constitutional reforms in 2001 and 2004 and eight legislative packages adopted by Parliament between February 2002 and July 2004.⁴⁰ the Communication presents a three-pronged strategy:

- cooperation to reinforce and support the reform process in Turkey, in particular in relation to the fulfilment of the Copenhagen political criteria. This will be done by revising the Accession Partnership, by setting out priorities in particular for the reform process, and by an upgraded pre-accession strategy.
- specific conditions for the conduct of accession negotiations with Turkey are proposed in case the European Council decides to open the negotiations;
- substantially strengthened political and cultural dialogue bringing together people from the EU member states and Turkey⁴¹.

It is interesting to note that at some point the Commission points to the fact that the radical change that Turkey is going through also involved an "evolution of mentalities"⁴². It is stated that Turkey, with its ongoing reform process, would be "an important model of a country with a majority Muslim population adhering to such fundamental principles as liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law."⁴³

Economic Assessment:

The Commission also touches upon the economic benefits of the EU's enlargement to include Turkey into the internal market, depending on the success

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴² Ibid., p. 3.

⁴³ Ibid.

of Turkey to carry out the reforms as "strengthening corporate governance and regulatory frameworks, intensifying the fight against corruption, and significantly improving the functioning of the judiciary."

According to the Commission, the economic impact on the EU, of Turkey's accession would be positive but relatively small, both due to the modest size of the Turkish economy and to the degree of economic integration already existing before accession. The accession of Turkey, a lower middle income country, would increase regional economic disparities in the enlarged EU in a way similar to the most recent enlargement, and would represent a major challenge for cohesion policy. Turkey would qualify for significant support from the structural and cohesion funds over a long period of time. A number of regions in present Member States benefiting from structural funds support could lose their eligibility on the basis of present rules. Another challenge that would stem from Turkey's possible accession to the EU is related to its huge population and the probability of migration to EU countries. The Commission at this point suggests that "long transition periods and a permanent safeguard clause can be considered to avoid serious disturbances in the EU labour market." On the positive side, however, the population dynamic of Turkey is regarded as a possible contribution to offsetting the ageing of EU societies. In this context, the EU also has a strong interest to see that reforms and investments are made in education and training in Turkey over the next decade.

On the issue of finance, the Commission states that "the budgetary impact of Turkish membership to the EU can only be fully assessed once the parameters for the financial negotiations with Turkey have been defined in the context of the financial perspectives from 2014 onwards."

Geopolitical / Foreign Policy Assessment:

The Commission states that "Turkey's accession would be different from previous enlargements because of the combined impact of Turkey's population, size, geographical location, economic, security and military potential." which give Turkey "the capacity to contribute to regional and international stability such as the Middle East and Caucasus. The Commission states that from the point of view of the EU's role in foreign affairs, Turkey as a future member state can be regarded both as an asset and a liability for the EU. In assessing the impact of Turkey's membership on EU's external policies, the Commission suggests that four factors should be taken into account:

Turkey's relations with the neighbouring regions,
Turkey's membership of international institutions,
Turkey's potential contribution to EU's security and defence policy,
domestic factors affecting Turkish foreign policy.

Within this context, Turkey's accession to the EU is regarded by the Commission as a way to secure better energy supply routes for the EU, since "good implementation by Turkey of other EU policies in the fields of environment, transport, energy and consumer protection would also have considerable positive effects for EU citizens elsewhere."

A challenge that would stem from Turkey's future inclusion in the EU is regarded as the management of the EU's long, new external borders, which would constitute an important policy challenge and require significant investment. Managing migration and asylum, as well as fighting organised crime, terrorism, trafficking of human beings, drugs and arms smuggling would all be facilitated through closer cooperation both before and after accession.

Turkey's accession, assessed on the basis of the Constitution for Europe, would significantly affect the allocation of European Parliament seats of current Member States, in particular the medium sized and large countries. In the Council, Turkey would have an important voice in the decision making process in view of its population share, which would be reflected in the Council voting system. The impact in terms of the Commission would be less important, given the planned reduction of the members of the Commission from 2014 onwards.

Turkey is also seen as an asset regarding its contribution to EU common foreign and security policy, since it has the material capacity and manpower. The Commission states that although this is the case, political ability and willingness to contribute to EU's CFSP and ESDP remains in doubt.

The rest of the Communication deals with more specific issues mentioned in the Progress Report and which are more technical, such as internal market (free movement of goods, intellectual and industrial property rights, competition policy, adoption of common external tariff etc.), agriculture, veterinary and phytosanitary issues, fisheries, justice and home affairs, insitutional and budgetary aspects etc. It is beyond the scope of this article to deal with the details of each issue due to time and space limitations.

Conclusion

It is possible to conclude from the above account that the *raison d'être* of EU enlargement has not always applied to the Turkish case, since Turkey poses a serious challenge for the EU with its huge population, different cultural characteristics, delicate economy and fragile geostrategical location. The asset/liability assessments made by the EU on Turkey's inclusion to the EU enlargement scheme have not always been consistent throughout the history of Turkey-EU relations. They depended on factors intrinsic to the EU and Turkey respectively, as well as the specific international conjuncture. Thus, Turkey has been seen either as a liability or as an asset, depending on such factors as the decision making mechanisms within the EU, the domestic situation in Turkey and the international context that surround both actors.

Although the 2004 Progress Report prepared by the Commission confirmed the positive steps taken by Turkey in fulfilling the Copenhagen criteris, the final decision of the European Council in December 2004 regarding the opening of the accession negotiations with Turkey remains to be seen. It seems probable that the final decision will be marked by the differences of opinion between EU leaders and a possible 'European Disunion'. Most recently, upon the release of the 2004 Progress Report on Turkey, French President Jacques Chirac stated that "the French Parliament would be consulted on the issue of Turkey's membership," and added that "at any moment France can withdraw, can apply a veto or can refuse."⁴⁴ Germany's Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, is pushing for opening negotiations with Turkey and states "We have a new task that will shape this century: We have to give globalisation political contours. Bringing Turkey into the group will help deter Muslim terrorists."⁴⁵

The release of a Communication to be submitted to the European Parliament and European Council reveals the fact that there has been a great effort by the Commission to prepare an asset/liability assessment for the possibility of Turkey's future inclusion into the EU and submit it to the European leaders. The Commission seems to lay down the pros and cons of Turkey's position vis-a-vis the EU clearly, since the long history of relations between Turkey and the EU will enter another critical turning point after the decision of the European Council in December 2004 regarding Turkey's future in the EU. From the recent Communication released by the Commission, it seems that the ultimate assessment

⁴⁴EU Business, "France 'Free' to block Turkey's EU membership: Chirac, found at website <http://www.eubusiness.com/afp/041010183902.nm146wla>, 10 October 2004.

⁴⁵Sam Hapgood, "Fischer Sees Turkey's Membership in EU as Part of War on Terror," F.A.Z. Weekly, 5 March 2004, found at website: <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=3475>.

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whether Turkey constitutes an asset or a liability and a subsequent decision will be left to the European Council, whose decision will also be influenced by many other factors extrinsic to Turkey, such as the role of the United States, the war on Iraq, the differences of opinion of the European leaders and cultural considerations.