
ENLARGEMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD**EU Integration and the Prospect of further Enlargement: The Case of Turkey****Andreas Theophanous** Director, CCEIA**Christina Ioannou** Research Fellow, CCEIA

Despite the fact that it has been over five years since the European Union (EU) and Turkey started accession negotiations, this remains a major issue of intense debate and controversy across Europe. With the bulk of the negotiations chapters blocked by the EU, the prospect of Turkey's accession is uncertain. Turkey considers accession to the EU as a strategic objective. Yet, it does not appear that Ankara fully appreciates what is required in order to become a member of the EU. Turkey seems to be pursuing an *à la carte* policy in relation to the multi-dimensional challenges that it has to address (such as respect for basic freedoms, the Cyprus problem, the Kurdish issue and the role of the army, among many others). This paper briefly assesses the prospects for a potential EU enlargement involving Turkey.

Within this framework, a number of issues are addressed: (a) the philosophical approaches in relation to Turkey's potential accession, (b) the wider debate concerning the kind of Europe that existing members would like to see, as well as (c) the practical problems faced in relation to Turkey's accession process. In this context, key questions are raised as to the extent to which the problems encountered, as well as the intense debate on the issue of Turkey, threaten to derail this country's accession course. The broader philosophical debate in relation to the future of Europe and Turkey's commitments are also assessed.

Historical background

For over half a century, the EU (and its predecessor, the European Economic Community) has been pursuing, in a broad spectrum of policy areas, ever-deeper integration through closer cooperation among its members. At the same time, this integration process has come to involve more Member States through successive enlargements. The two processes (deepening and widening) have often moved in parallel, without cancelling each other out.

Instead, with the aim of advancing peace and economic prosperity, as well as consolidating democracy and the rule of law, the EU has hoped that the two processes would foster one another by creating an ever-growing and continuously deepening cooperation among neighbouring countries that share the same principles and values. At the same time, it was expected that these countries would also foster solidarity and enhance tolerance.

Since the 2004 enlargement, the EU has turned its attention to South Eastern Europe. More specifically, the states most likely to be involved in future enlargement waves are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo under United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1244, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey. The European Commission believes that if and when these countries meet all the requirements of EU membership (Copenhagen Criteria and other obligations) this will benefit all parties involved.

The challenge of enlargement and the case of Turkey

EU enlargement and Turkey: understanding the key issues and debates

In relation to Turkey, the situation is complicated by a number of issues: these include the size of its population, its socioeconomic structure, the Kurdish problem, the Cyprus question, media freedom, religious rights, the military's role, etc. So far, the process has moved at a very slow pace, often reaching points of stagnation. Despite the fact that Turkey has been a candidate country for EU membership since 1999 (Helsinki European Council), accession negotiations were not launched until October 2005, following the screening process. At the same time, Turkey's failure to implement the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement with respect to the Republic of Cyprus, led to the Council to decide in December 2006 that eight relevant chapters of the *acquis* (Free Movement of Goods, Right of Establishment and Freedom to Provide Services, Financial Services, Agriculture and Rural Development, Fisheries, Transport Policy, Customs Union and External Relations) would not be opened, while no chapter would be provisionally closed until Turkey fulfils its commitment and opens its ports and airports to ships and planes from the Republic of Cyprus. One of the most important chapters, that of Energy, which could carry significant benefits for both Turkey and the EU, has been all but frozen, as Turkey (also) questions the sovereign right of the Republic of Cyprus to exploit its recently discovered natural gas reserves. Overall, since October 2005, the EU has provisionally closed only one chapter of the *acquis* and opened negotiations on another 12 chapters.

Philosophical approaches to Turkey's potential EU accession

There are arguably three philosophical approaches in relation to the potential accession of Turkey to the EU. These can be summarised as follows:

- Turkey's accession to the EU would contribute to a better understanding between the West and the Islamic world. This would also facilitate the integration of Muslim communities and immigrants into European societies. Furthermore, it would ease tensions between the East and the West and contribute to the economic and demographic rejuvenation of the EU. Besides, it is argued, there have been promises and commitments to Turkey that cannot be revoked.
- Turkey does not really belong to Europe, either politically or culturally. If Turkey accedes to the EU, it could seriously challenge the identity of the Union and may compromise its ambitions, as well as its political culture and the prospects for its political integration. The EU cannot absorb Turkey. If the latter becomes a member of the Union, then the potential for political integration, even in the long run, is likely to be frustrated.
- It is more important to keep Turkey on the track of further modernisation and Europeanisation. The challenging question of whether Turkey should become a member of the EU does not have to be addressed at this instant. The possibility of the Turkish accession should be kept open. If Turkey fulfils the necessary criteria, it would be unfair to keep this country out. If it does not, then it would be unwise to adopt a shorter yardstick in order to make Turkey a member. Under these conditions, a special relationship could be discussed.

Unquestionably, these challenges involving the future of Europe and Turkey preoccupy politicians, academics and policy analysts, as well as the mass media and public opinion at large. It will take some time before a clear and definite path is charted. Clearly, the EU finds itself in a very difficult situation: on the one hand, there are principles and norms that cannot be violated, and on the other, there are serious issues *vis-à-vis* Turkey that must be addressed.

Which Europe? Three possible scenarios for future integration

Different perspectives among Member States over the shape and direction of Europe are commonplace, as the Union faces today both historical as well as political dilemmas in relation to its future. There are three possible scenarios that different countries within the EU as well as various national political groups are currently contemplating:

1. The first school of thought believes in an ever-deepening integration process that would further strengthen the structure and institutions of the Union. This camp would like to see a more efficient, effective and democratic organisation, which would be in a position to bridge its deficits. Furthermore, it is stressed that the EU should have an enhanced international role. This scenario promotes a more integrated system of governance within a Union that would be able to determine its own common foreign security and defence policy. This prospect may very well lead to a federal union that would foster greater solidarity among its citizens. The possibility of gaining a voice in the UN Security Council could further elevate the Union's international position.

2. The second school of thought mostly reflects the British perspective. This emphasises an even more enlarged EU, which would include both Turkey and the Balkan countries, as well as former Soviet states, such as Ukraine and Georgia. This Atlanticist vision centres on the idea of an enlarged economic union with loose political relations among Member States. The latter would thus be in a position to opt in or out of policy areas. As far as foreign, security and defence policies are concerned, this group pays particular attention to the role of Washington and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).
3. The third school of thought concerns the scenario of a multi-speed Europe. At the core of this new Europe would be the countries wishing to form a politically united Europe, while the rest would engage in various forms of cooperation. The idea of countries integrating at different levels could be a plausible scenario, as variable geometry could allow countries like Turkey to join the EU's ranks. It should be noted that although this model was not seriously considered until now, today's reality is that the EU does not move in a uniform manner.

It is important for the EU to be able to specify its current vision and pursue it successfully, while overcoming important controversies among its members regarding the course and shape of future integration.

The challenges for Turkey today

The Cyprus question remains a serious obstacle on Turkey's accession path. Turkey does not recognise the Republic of Cyprus and continues to occupy (since the summer of 1974) almost 40% of its territory. Even though (with the reserved consent of Cyprus), the EU started accession negotiations with Turkey in October 2005, Ankara still seems to be reluctant to implement even the minimal obligations undertaken in relation to Cyprus (and by extension the EU), which derive specifically from the Ankara Protocol and from European political culture in general. This behaviour may be indicative of attitudes in Turkey – attitudes which seem to address these obligations in an *à la carte* manner. Perhaps the strong support that Turkey has been receiving from various countries has encouraged this policy pattern. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, in December 2006 the European Council froze eight chapters for Turkey.

Apart from Cyprus, however, Turkey has yet to address several other challenges. These include additional reforms for a modern legal framework, economic transformation, the Kurdish issue, claims in the Aegean, religious rights, the Armenian genocide, the alleged “re-islamisation” of the state under the Erdogan government, the (supreme) role of the army, women's rights, media freedoms and respect for basic freedoms more generally. Several EU countries – such as France, Austria, The Netherlands, Germany, Greece and Cyprus – have particular sensitivities to all these issues. The question of the EU's vision for the future is also key in this regards.

Furthermore, one of Turkey's major characteristics is its high degree of statism, which also assumes a supreme role for the army; this contradicts the European value system. It should also be noted that the Turkish establishment internally promotes the consolidation of one identity and pursues an assimilationist approach – which makes several ethnic and religious minorities feel suffocated. Yet, Ankara tends to encourage Turkish-speaking people residing outside Turkey to maintain their Turkishness even at the expense of not integrating into the society of the country in which they live. This has been causing serious problems across several societies. Thus, Cyprus is not the only country where Turkish demands – if implemented – would lead to a deeply segregated society. This attitude and practice recently prompted Chancellor Angela Merkel to claim that the multicultural model had not worked in Germany.

Euro-Turkish relations constitute a major issue in both European and international affairs. No doubt the further democratisation and modernisation of Turkey would contribute to the enhancement of stability, security and cooperation in the broader region. Yet, Turkey has not seemed to be willing to fully comply with the prerequisites of becoming a full member of the EU, and its policies do not demonstrate an unambiguous commitment to adopting the value system of the EU. Similarly, it is doubtful whether the EU can eventually absorb Turkey without changing direction, purpose and philosophy. This is the major reason underlying advocacy by Germany and France for a special relationship between the EU and Turkey.

Even though the Commission's 2010 Progress Report on Turkey refers to positive steps taken in the country – such as the improvement of fundamental rights, the continuation of judicial reform and the lifting of restrictions on broadcasting in languages other than Turkish, it also raises concerns about Turkey's difficulties in guaranteeing basic freedoms. Clearly, Turkey must introduce further reforms in order to protect freedom of the press, speech and religion. It must also protect women's and minority rights, conscientious objectors from imprisonment and reduce the role of the army, amongst other things. At the same time, it must implement the EU-Turkey Association Agreement's Additional Protocol in full (thus including the Republic of Cyprus). Moreover, it must withdraw its occupation troops from the northern part of Cyprus and respect the independence and territorial integrity of the island-state. This would also facilitate the solution of the Cyprus question. Indeed, if we take into consideration the recent demonstrations of Turkish Cypriots against Turkey, there is no doubt that if Ankara ends its occupation, the Cyprus question would be soon resolved.

Concluding remarks

Euro-Turkish relations constitute a vital challenge as well as an issue of international concern. The strengthening of the EU and its further integration are major aspirations. At the same time, however, the further modernisation and democratisation of Turkey also remain fundamental objectives. An important aim would be to accommodate all these objectives.

Turkey's European path necessitates the fulfilment of serious obligations. Major internal reforms need to be made. Adopting, and above all implementing, new legislation is essential. The country should also seek to address its relations with other states in a conclusive manner. Turkey has so far expected other countries to adjust to its own demands without itself displaying the political will to move forward. If Turkey is indeed serious about its democratisation and European orientation, it must eventually choose to leave behind its maximalist designs on Cyprus and see it as an equal partner in the EU.

Perhaps one of the major issues that needs to be studied further is the likely outcome of a decision for a special relationship between the EU and Turkey on Cyprus. Such a decision may be reached either by the EU, or by Turkey, or by both. In view of the fact that, to a great extent in the last few years, the strategy in relation to promoting a resolution to the Cyprus question depended (particularly in recent years) on the assumption that Turkey will eventually join the EU, this matter should be revisited.

Nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged that the further democratisation and modernisation of Turkey will serve multiple objectives. Turkey must have a fair chance for accession to the EU. But, Turkey's Europeanisation process involves obligations that cannot be compromised. Turkey should take note of this and act accordingly. If, however, Ankara believes that eventually its interests would be better served by a special relationship then that is a possibility that would need to be examined and acted upon accordingly.