



Robert Schuman

Turkey's Membership Application: Implications for the EU

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Turkey's Membership Application: Implications for the EU

Introduction

Turkey applied for EU membership in 1987: that is, three years before Cyprus and Malta and between seven and nine years before applications were lodged by ten Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs). Yet, when all but two of the post-Turkey applicants became EU members in May 2004, membership negotiations not only had yet to be opened with Turkey but they had not even been definitely promised.

For a number of reasons, the Turkish application has not been viewed by the EU in the same way as other applications. Rather, it has been seen as being especially and distinctively problematical. This has been partly because it has been thought Turkish membership will create a number of particular difficulties for the EU and partly because Turkey as a country has been regarded - much more so than have other EU applicant states - as being very 'different' from the EU 'mainstream'.

This paper focuses on the Turkish application, and more especially on its implications for the EU. The paper does not attempt to examine specific policy and institutional implications of Turkish membership in detail. Those who want such an examination should consult the European Commission's October 2004 working document *Issues Arising From Turkey's Membership Perspective* (European Commission 2004c). Rather, the paper seeks to explain how the EU's position on the Turkish application has reached its current position and to provide an overview of the challenges the prospect of Turkish membership poses for the EU. A main conclusion of the paper is that although the Turkish application clearly does provide major challenges for the EU, both in terms of managing the accession process and then membership itself, there is every reason to suppose that it can be handled successfully. A key reason for taking this view is the changes that can be expected to occur in both Turkey and the EU in the years before accession takes place.

The Background to the Present Situation

Although the EU has been reluctant to open accession negotiations with Turkey, it has long been anxious to maintain good relations with it. Accordingly, the strategy of dealing with Turkey's desire for membership has, until recently, been to establish as close relations with it as possible - short of opening accession negotiations.

A base to conduct relations in this way existed from 1963, when an association agreement was contracted between the EEC and Turkey. The agreement included a range of trade, aid, and cultural and political cooperation provisions. It also contained a membership perspective, but one that was phrased only in very general terms and with no schedule attached.

In 1995, as part of the strategy of moving closer to Turkey but not offering membership, agreement was reached on concluding the customs union that had been foreseen originally in 1963 but which had not been given effect - largely because of concerns in EC/EU states over Turkey's democratic credentials and poor record on human rights. In all probability the customs union would not have satisfied Turkey in the long term, but in the event it did not do so in the short term either. A key reason for this was the faster track onto which post-Turkey membership applicants were placed in 1997. On the basis of recommendations made by the Commission in its *Agenda 2000* document (European Commission, 1997), the European Council at its December 1997 meeting in Luxembourg decided that membership applications would open with Cyprus and five CEECs in March 1998 and would do so with the other CEEC applicants as soon as they were ready (except for Malta, which had suspended its application). There were thus to be two enlargement 'waves'. But Turkey was deemed ineligible to be considered even for the second wave. An attempt was made to head-off possible Turkish adverse reaction by emphasizing that it was eligible in principle for accession, that it would be judged on the basis of the same criteria as other applicants, and that the EU would draw up a strategy to prepare it for accession (European Council, 1997: 11-12). But as compared with what the other applicant states were being offered, this was very much second best.

Indeed, the second best status was emphasized in a manner Turkey found to be positively insulting by the decision of the Luxembourg summit to create a new European gathering - to be called The European Conference - which would bring together on an annual basis the leaders of EU states and all applicant states including Turkey. The Conference was clearly designed with little purpose other than to offer comfort to Turkey.

Before long the Luxembourg position on Turkey was being seen as having been mistaken. It came, indeed, to be seen as posing a possible fundamental breach in relations between the EU and Turkey. This was because the decision to keep Turkey waiting yet longer, without any promise of a future review of the decision, let alone a possible date when negotiations might open, produced angry reactions from the Turkish government and other Turkish elites about how Turkey was being treated. Moreover, hints began to emanate from Turkey that it might be forced to look elsewhere for friends.

Accordingly, the line towards Turkey was revised at the December 1999 Helsinki summit, with Turkey being accorded the status of a 'candidate country'⁽¹⁾. This accord was partly symbolic, but it had substance too in that the language concerning Turkey's prospect of eventual membership was made generally more encouraging and specific provision was made for a pre-accession strategy embracing an accession partnership (European Council, 1999: 3). Subsequently, an accession partnership designed to assist Turkey to make the changes required so as to enable it to meet EU's accession eligibility conditions - the Copenhagen criteria - was adopted by the Council of Ministers in March 2001. The priorities identified in the partnership were then reflected in Turkey's own National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis which was adopted, also in March 2001, by the Turkish government.

In 2000-01, the EU-15 looked increasingly likely to meet the target of concluding the accession negotiations with most of the CEEC and Mediterranean applicant states by the December 2002 Copenhagen European Council meeting. It also continued to 'ratchet up' its language on Turkey's prospects of accession negotiations. At the December 2001 Laeken summit, for example, it was declared that 'Turkey's progress towards complying with the political criteria for accession...has brought forward the prospect of the opening of negotiations with Turkey' (European Council, 2001: 3).

As the crucial Copenhagen summit approached, pressure on the EU to give Turkey a date for the opening of accession negotiations intensified. One source of pressure stemmed from the Turkish case being strengthened by recent reforms to the Turkish constitution and changes to domestic political and administrative practices designed to improve Turkey's credibility under the democratic and human rights dimensions of the Copenhagen criteria. Another source was the overwhelming victory of an Islamic party - the Justice and Development Party (AKP) - in the Turkish general election of November 2002. The new government quickly made clear that it was as resolved as its seemingly more pro-western predecessors had been to seek a date for the early opening of accession negotiations.

At Copenhagen, the leaders of the EU-15 did not quite meet Turkey's demands to set a definite date for the opening of accession negotiations, but came much closer to doing so than had been anticipated. The leaders declared that 'If the European Council in December 2004, on the basis of a report and recommendation for the Commission, decides that Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union will open accession negotiations without delay' (European Council, 2002: 5).

Although it was not laid down as an explicit condition by the EU leaders at their December 2002 meeting, it was made clear to Turkey - through both informal channels and public statements by some EU leaders - that even if the Copenhagen political criteria were met, the December 2004 European Council would be extremely unlikely to approve the opening of accession negotiations unless in the intervening period Turkey was seen to have done what it could to help resolve the Cyprus Problem. (Cyprus has been physically divided into Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot areas since an invasion of the northern part of the island by Turkey in 1974. Some 35,000 Turkish troops are based in northern Cyprus.) These 'warnings' were issued partly on the basis of political choice by those who sympathized with the Greek Cypriot position and/or did not wish to see the EU import a potential security problem, and partly on the basis of a recognition of political realities: it was anticipated that the government of the Republic of Cyprus would be represented in the European Council by December 2004, and it would be likely to exercise a veto on the opening of accession negotiations if Turkey continued to support and underpin the division of the country. In November 2003, the Commission, in its first post-Copenhagen annual report on the progress towards accession being made by Turkey, went further than it ever had before in linking the Cyprus Problem to Turkey's prospect of EU membership. The Commission stated that Turkey 'should provide determined support for efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem' (European Commission, 2003a: 45) The overall strategy paper on enlargement that was

issued alongside the report on Turkey and reports on the other acceding and applicant countries was even clearer in emphasizing the importance of Turkey becoming proactively involved in promoting a settlement: 'The Commission considers that there are favorable conditions for the two communities to reach a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem before Cyprus' accession to the EU on 1 May 2004. The absence of a settlement could become a serious obstacle to Turkey's EU aspirations' (European Commission, 2003b: 16)

In the period between the December 2002 and December 2004 summits, several leading EU practitioners - including national leaders - made clear their reservations about proceeding with the Turkish application. For example, the President of the Constitutional Convention - the body which largely drafted the EU's Constitutional Treaty - Valery Giscard D'Estaing, warned that Turkish accession would be 'the end of Europe' (*The Times*, September 23, 2004: 34) and 'would change the nature of the European project' (*EUobserver*, 26 November 2004). In even more dramatic language, the (outgoing) European Commissioner for the Internal Market, the Dutchman Frits Bolkestein, warned of the 'Islamisation of Europe' and pronounced that should Turkey become an EU member 'The relief of Vienna in 1683 [by a Catholic army from an Ottoman siege] will have been in vain' (*The Guardian*, 22 September, 2004: 17). President Chirac of France attempted to canvass support for a privileged partnership between the EU and Turkey rather than Turkish EU membership - an idea that was also floated by Giscard D'Estaing and by the outgoing Austrian Commissioner for Agriculture, Franz Fischler (*European Voice*, 16-22 September:7; *EUobserver*, 26 November 2004).

The Turkish government was not deflected in its resolution by such open expressions of concern and doubt from within the EU. The idea of a privileged partnership was, for example, flatly rejected by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Turkey's position remained to press ahead with making sure that in December 2004 the EU leaders would have little option but to give a date for the opening of accession negotiations.

As part of this pressing ahead, Turkey duly 'fell into line' on Cyprus, by - successfully - urging Turkish Cypriots to support the April 2004 referendum in northern Cyprus on the Annan Plan for re-unification of the island. Re-unification did not subsequently occur, but this was because in a parallel referendum Greek Cypriots voted against the Annan Plan. In consequence, the main responsibility for the continuing division of Cyprus was now seen to rest in the eyes of all EU-25 states - apart, of course, from the Republic of Cyprus itself - with the Greek Cypriots rather than with Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots.

As for the formal membership criteria, including the troublesome political criteria, in October 2004 the Commission duly presented documentation for the leaders to be able to take a decision at their December summit. The documentation was issued in three forms: the required recommendation (European Commission, 2004a); the annual Progress Report (European Commission, 2004b); and a paper reviewing issues arising from Turkey's membership perspective (European Commission, 2004c). The recommendation

said that Turkey virtually did now meet the Copenhagen criteria, so the opening of accession negotiations was recommended. However, no opening date was specified, and - conscious of concerns in several member states about the implications for the EU of Turkish membership - the Commission advised that the negotiations be conducted on the basis of stricter terms that had been imposed on any previous candidate state (see below for more on this). The December 2004 summit subsequently accepted the Commission's recommendation and resolved that negotiations be opened in October 2005, subject to certain conditions. The conditions were agreed only after difficult and tense exchanges - mostly outside formal summit sessions, in which Turkey was able to insert itself as a negotiator - over how tough the requirements on Turkey should be and also over Cyprus's insistence that Turkey must give the Republic of Cyprus full recognition. The two main sets of conditions concerned measures to ensure progress would continue with the Turkish reform programme and a requirement that Turkey give implicit recognition to the Republic of Cyprus by signing an updated customs union agreement with all twenty five EU states (European Council, 2004: 4-6). (See Ludlow, 2005, for an account of the December summit's handling of the Turkish question.)

The Perceived Negative Implications of Turkish Membership

Why has the Turkish application been, and why is it still, so problematical from the EU's viewpoint? Why have EU member states so lacked enthusiasm for Turkish membership? The answer to these questions is complex, with a number of specific reasons combining in the explanation. The reasons can be split between those that can be described as being formal and those that are more informal.

Formal reasons

Because of the sensitivities involved, the EU has preferred to explain its position in terms of formal reasons. These were initially given in the Commission's 1989 Opinion on the application and since 1998 have reiterated in the Commission's annual reports on progress towards accession.

Prior to the June 1993 Copenhagen meeting of the European Council, all that existed in terms of formal conditions was the very open Article 237 of the EEC Treaty which stated 'Any European State may apply to become a member of the Community.....The conditions of admission and the adjustment to the Treaty necessitated thereby shall be the subject of an agreement between the Member States and the applicant State'. Turkey's position as a European state was never openly questioned, but the EC still made it clear that no agreement on membership would be possible in the foreseeable future. This was stated as being primarily because an unwritten condition of EC accession was that only democratic states based on the rule of law could join, and in Turkey democracy was fragile and there was a lack of respect for human rights.

At the 1993 Copenhagen summit, EU national leaders agreed - with membership applications from CEECs pending - to formally lay down more specific conditions that countries aspiring to membership would have to meet. The Copenhagen conditions - or

criteria as they came to be known – were designed partly to ensure there would not be too much of a gap between the political and economic systems of existing and new member states. They were designed also so that existing member states could satisfy themselves that new members would respect and be able to adopt Union laws and policies – the so-called *acquis*. The key paragraph setting out the Copenhagen criteria stated:

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. (European Council, 1993: 12).

From June 1993, the formal reasons given to Turkey for not activating its membership application with the opening of accession negotiations amounted to saying that it did meet the Copenhagen criteria. In very recent times, as the EU has gradually moved towards the opening of accession negotiations, the Commission's, and more broadly the EU's, expressed reservations about Turkey and the Copenhagen criteria have gradually been toned down. The general line has become that Turkey has made great strides towards meeting the political and economic aspects of the criteria, but there remain important areas where further progress is necessary. Regarding the political criteria, Turkey's record on human rights has been criticized, especially in relation to the treatment of Turkish Kurds, and concerns have been expressed about aspects of the functioning of Turkish democracy, including the political role of the military. Regarding the economic criteria, Turkey's economy has been recognized as being based primarily on market principles, but there have been concerns that in important respects it is an economy that remains fragile. It was, after all, only in 2001 that a major economic crisis saw plunging economic growth in Turkey, rampant inflation, and the need of a \$16 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund. The EU had advised Turkey that further liberalization and modernization are required before its economy can meet the rules of, and be able to compete in, the internal market.

Informal reasons

But behind the formal reasons for the skepticism, reservations, and - in the case of some member states - strong opposition to Turkish membership, have lurked a number of other reasons. These have been less formal, and certainly less openly expressed, but they have been strongly felt in some quarters. Occasionally there have been attempts to link some of these reasons to the Copenhagen conditions that applicants must meet. Occasionally too the reasons have been linked to the fourth, often forgotten, Copenhagen criteria for EU expansion: 'The Union's capacity to absorb new members, while maintaining the momentum of European integration, is also an important consideration in the general interest of both the Union and the candidate countries' (European Council, 1993: 12). More often than not, however, the reasons have been considered and discussed only in

private, and given only rare public outings. What then are these informal, or unofficial, reasons for the EU having been, and still being, so hesitant and doubtful about admitting Turkey? They usually stem from one, or more commonly several, of the following key features of Turkey:

Size. Turkey currently has a population of 70 million, which is projected to increase to 100 million by about 2020. By the time of its admission it may have surpassed its current position of being second only to Germany of the EU-25 in population size and be the largest EU member state.

Level of economic development. Turkey is a significantly poorer country than any of the ten states which joined the EU in May 2004 and is also poorer than Bulgaria and Romania which are scheduled to join in 2007. Despite its current population accounting for 15 per cent of the EU-25 population, its GDP is equivalent to just 2 per cent of the EU-25 GDP. Its GDP per capita is 28.5 per cent of the EU-25 GDP (European Commission, 2004c: 13).

Geographical location. Most of Turkey is located geographically in Asia and has long borders with states that are, or potentially are, unstable and/or hostile to the EU. These states are located in the southern Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan) and the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, and Syria).

Islamism. Turkey is overwhelmingly an Islamic country, albeit one with a secular state structure. Turkish membership would increase the EU's Islamic population from its current 3 per cent to around 20 per cent.

The cumulative effect of these features has been such as to produce a widely shared concern that has been, and still is, widespread amongst existing EU states, especially EU-15 states, that Turkey poses not just a challenge but a threat to the EU as it now is. As Table 1 shows, most EU-25 states are no better than neutral, and several are negative, towards Turkish membership.

The nature of the threat that Turkey is widely held to pose is seen as taking different forms. For example, Turkish accession clearly will impact on EU institutions and decision making processes. The Commission will perhaps not be overly affected, but existing member states' presence in the Council and the EP most certainly will be, with larger and medium-sized states in particular losing presence and voting strengths.

Another dimension to the perceived threat is that the combined effect of Turkey's size, economic underdevelopment and economic structure are likely to result in it being a major beneficiary of EU funding Programmes on accession, thus creating budgetary problems. Naturally, so far in advance of Turkey's possible entry, estimates of the budgetary implications are necessarily extremely hazy. Much depends on the extent to which existing EU 'spending policies' remain in their present form, the levels of economic growth in Turkey, and the time periods over which Turkey becomes a beneficiary of the spending policies – there is a ten year phase-in period in the case of the

EU-10 states (the states which became members in May 2004) and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Certainly, however, if major changes from the present state of affairs do not occur and if extended phase-in periods are not agreed, then the budgetary implications are very considerable, with Turkey set to become a major recipient of EU funding. To take the two major areas of EU funding, the CAP and cohesion policy: agriculture currently accounts for just over one third of Turkey's labor force, while agricultural output generates 12.2 per cent of GDP (the corresponding figures for the EU-25 are 5 per cent and 2.2 per cent); the whole of Turkey would currently qualify for Objective 1 Structural Fund support (that is, throughout the country the GDP per capita is below 75 per cent of the EU average). As an indication of the scale of the budgetary issues that have to be addressed in respect of Turkey, the Commission has estimated that, on the basis of the existing *acquis* and assuming there is a ten year phasing-in of direct payments, Turkish membership could cost about €30 billion per annum at 2004 prices (European Commission, 2004: 46-7). This is equivalent to about one quarter of the current budget!

Of course, the nature and extent of the concerns of individual EU-25 governments on the particular implications of Turkish membership varies according to national circumstances and political choices. For the German government, for example, key considerations include: persisting high levels of domestic unemployment; fears that Germany will be the main intended country of domicile of Turks wishing to take advantage of free movement of labor (a fear based largely on the fact that around 2 million of the 3.8 million Turkish migrants who are thought to be currently resident in the EU are in Germany); apprehensions that Turkish membership will impose further pressures on the EU's budget (Germany remains by far the largest net contributor to the EU budget); and a concern that allowing Turkey to join will further undermine Europe's predominantly Christian inheritance and identity (a concern that is expressed even more strongly by the opposition CDU/CSU, which is openly against Turkish membership.)

Concerns of governments are reflected in public concerns. Across the EU as whole, public opinion polls show an average of about 35 per cent of people being in favor of Turkish membership, about 25 per cent being against, and about 40 per cent being unsure. In a few states there are actually large majorities against: by as much as 2: 1 in Austria, France and Germany. It is no coincidence that in two of these states - France and Austria - the governments have sought to reassure their populations, and perhaps also make it more difficult for Turkey to join, by promising national referendums on Turkish accession if membership negotiations are completed. (An additional consideration in the French case has been a hope that the promise of a referendum on Turkish membership will help avoid the issue featuring significantly in the referendum on the Constitutional Treaty.)

At political elite levels, the main concerns and opposition stem primarily from centre right parties (especially those in the Christian Democratic tradition), strongly pro-integration parties, and far right parties. The concerns of each of these groups are clear enough. For the Christian Democrats, it is as described above with the CDU/CSU: weakening Europe's Christian inheritance and identity. For pro-integrationists (who

overlap with the Christian Democrats), it is the perceived potential harmful implications for such things as the smooth functioning of EU decision-making processes, the further development of the EU policy agenda, and the nature of European consciousness and identity. And for the far right, it is a melange of matters related mainly to resistance to the integration process as a whole, sovereignty concerns, and ethnicity considerations.

It was significant that when the EP held a vote in December 2004 on whether or not to open accession negotiations with Turkey, the vote was held by secret ballot at the insistence of the centre right European People's Party (the largest party in the Parliament). In the vote, 407 voted for, 262 against, and there were 29 abstentions. There was little doubt from where most of the opposition votes against came.

The Perceived Positive Implications of Turkish Membership

The potential benefits for Turkey of EU membership are clear. They include better access to the EU market, improved prospects for inward investment, more financial aid, and participation in an extremely and increasingly important global political and economic power.

But the potential benefits for the EU are less clear, or at least are less recognized amidst the negativity of most of the discussions on the implications for the EU of Turkish membership. However, potential benefits do exist. They accrue primarily from:

The size of the Turkish market. Turkey's 70 million – and rapidly growing – population means that it is a large market. Currently, it is the EU's sixth largest trading partner. The EU-Turkey customs union means that there already exists reasonably open trade between the two, but barriers and obstacles that remain should gradually be removed as membership approaches. Amongst these barriers are a largely closed financial services sector and a distinctive framework of corporate law and structures.

The nature of Turkey's labor market. Turkey has a much younger workforce than the EU-25 and a much faster growing workforce given its high birth rates. According to Commission projections, the EU-25's total population will increase by just 2% (458 million to 449 million) between 2005 and 2025, with its working age population falling by 21 million. From 2005 to 2030, the number of people over 65 will rise by 52.3 % while the 15-64 age group will decrease by 6.8%, resulting in the ratio of dependent young and old people to people of working age increasing from 49% in 2005 to 66% in 2030 (European Commission, 2005). Movement of labor from Turkey to other EU states could thus be vital both to provide working personnel and to help maintain welfare systems which could be under severe pressures.

Turkey's Islamism. Whilst this is viewed by many in negative terms - often because it is seen as heralding the end of any prospect of the EU being based on a shared sense of identity - it can be viewed in a positive light too. The UK

government, for example, has based much of its public justification for supporting Turkey on the grounds of a real opportunity existing of embracing an Islamic country that is looking westwards. Might not, many proponents of Turkish membership ask, a moderate Islamic country inside the EU serve to demonstrate that Islam, democracy, and western capitalism can mix, to encourage moderate Islamism, and to help extend the EU's 'soft' influence in other Islamic countries with which it wishes to have better relations?

Turkey's strategic political and security position. Turkey occupies a key geopolitical position. It is physically located close to, and has considerable influence in, the Balkans, the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean, and several states of the former Soviet Union. A stable Turkey within the EU could have a stabilizing influence within this conflict-prone neighborhood.

At the same time as being located next to politically unstable areas, Turkey is a member of virtually all of the major western and European organizations, with the exception of the EU: the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and – most importantly of all - the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). As such Turkey already is, and as an EU member would have even greater potential to be, an important bridge between the West and countries currently on the margins of Western influence.

Why is the EU Proceeding Towards (Probable) Turkish Membership?

Given the problems and difficulties the Turkish application is widely seen as creating for the EU, why are EU decision-makers proceeding with it?

There are, broadly speaking, three types of explanation for the decision to open accession negotiations. All are significant for our purposes here because all suggest that the decision is being taken not on wholly cost-benefit grounds. That is to say, it is not being taken on the basis of all, or even most, decision-makers firmly believing that the benefits for the EU will outweigh the difficulties. On the contrary, indeed, the governments of virtually all existing EU member states harbor at least considerable reservations about the implications of the decision, and some are (not so) privately opposed to it.

The three explanations - which are best viewed as complementing, rather than as competing against, one another – see the decision as being a consequence of three different sorts of factors:

Political pressures

EU decision-makers have long been pressurized from various quarters to accept the Turkish application. The most obvious of these quarters has, of course, been Turkey itself

which, despite the clear reservations, doubts, and even opposition on the EU side, has just refused to give up on its ambitions for membership. As long as the Turkish reaction to rebuffs was confined to disappointment, EU governments did not become overly concerned. This situation changed, however, after the EU decided in 1997 to offer a foreseeable membership perspective to all applicants except Turkey. It changed because Turkish leaders reacted to the decision with anger and with statements and comments to the effect that Turkey might have to start looking more seriously to its east and south for allies. This resulted in many EU leaders coming to view the 1997 decision as having been over-dismissive, and indeed as being potentially dangerous if Turkey started to edge away from the EU.

This possibility of Turkey edging away also played a part in stiffening the pressures being exerted on EU decision-makers from other political actors. Turkey has never benefited from having a strong 'patron' or 'sponsor' of its case amongst existing EU members, in the way in which during the lead-up to the May 2004 enlargement some 'problem countries' did so benefit: Germany's strong support for Poland, for example, or Greece's support for Cyprus. But Turkey has, nonetheless, had 'friends' in EU circles, which have played an important role in supporting its case. Within the EU itself, the most important of these friends have been the UK on the one hand and – in recent times - Greece on the other. UK support has been important because of the UK's position as one of the EU's large states, whilst Greek support has had considerable symbolic significance because of the traditional enmity between Greece and Turkey. Outside the EU, the US – which for geo-strategic reasons has long been close to Turkey in western power circles – has acted virtually as a sponsor of the Turkish case. Indeed, on the eve of the crucial December 2002 Copenhagen summit, President Bush even telephoned the summit's chair, Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, to stress the strategic importance of Turkey (*European Voice*, 12-18 December 2002), and after an EU-US Summit in June 2004 he told a press conference 'As Turkey meets the EU standards of membership, the European Union should begin talks that will lead to full membership for the republic of Turkey) (*EUobserver*, 27 June 2004)..

Rational calculations

Most, but certainly not all, EU decision-makers would appear to believe privately that in terms of the factors that have to be considered when evaluating the likely consequences for the EU of Turkish membership, the overall balance sheet is in the red rather than the black. That there are potential benefits as well as potential costs of Turkish membership is widely recognized, but the latter are seen generally as being more significant than the former. Surely, then, the rational course of action for the EU would have been to attempt to continue with the policy of staying close to Turkey and cooperating with it on many fronts, but to refuse to open accession negotiations?

The fact that this is not the course of action chosen testifies to the limited use of rational decision making models when trying to explain the EU's position on Turkey. Such models rely on the decision maker being able to identify goals, recognize the alternative possible ways of achieving the goals, and then weighing the advantages and

disadvantages of the alternatives in a neutral manner. But in the EU there are numerous actors involved in decision making processes, and on Turkey they have different aims. This means there is no commonly agreed goal on the EU's future relations with Turkey, other than for them to be peaceful and for trade between the two to grow. In turn, this means the decision making process on Turkey's wish for membership cannot be a consequence of EU decision makers collectively choosing the best course of action to achieve an agreed goal on the basis of a careful weighing of the options available.

This is not, of course, to suggest that the preferences of individual EU actors cannot be partly explained in rational decision making terms. Take the case, for example, of the UK, which has long been a firm supporter of the Turkish application. This support has been given not because of a judgment that Turkish membership will create few difficulties but rather, in part at least, precisely because it is thought that it will do so. In particular, the very fact that Turkey is so different is seen as assisting the UK in its goal of ensuring that the EU remains relatively loose in organizational terms and does not drift further in a federal direction. On this basis, the UK's position is fully understandable in rational decision making terms.

The UK case shows how the presence of rationality as an explanatory concept in helping to explain the decision to move towards the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey is best seen by disaggregating the different *rationalities* of the various actors. When this is done, one can readily recognize why governments that are strong supporters of a more integrated Europe have considerable reservations about admitting Turkey, and why governments that wish to see the integration process slowed and believe Turkish admission will contribute to this by making the EU more difficult to manage view Turkish admission more favorably. One can readily recognize too why some governments with reservations are prepared to be flexible because they believe the situations of both Turkey and the EU will be sufficiently transformed by the time admittance eventually occurs (more on this below).

Values and unfolding rhetorical entrapment

There is an extensive body of literature testifying to how the decision to enlarge the EU to Central and Eastern European countries is best viewed not in pressure politics or rational terms but rather in sociological/constructivist terms (see, for example, Schimmelfennig, 2001 and 2002). Such an approach can also be extended to the Turkish application ⁽²⁾.

The essence of this view as applied to the CEECs is that whilst it was always recognized by the EU-15 that the admission of CEECs to the EU would indeed bring some benefits to the latter, the overall cost-benefit balance sheet was by no means clearly in the black, and for some individual EU states was likely to be in the red. Moreover, beyond measurable likely consequences of enlargement – found in economic indicators – there were a number of immeasurable possible consequences suggesting real dangers for the EU: for example, severe disruption of institutional functioning and security problems arising from freer movement of peoples. A decision on the CEEC applications based on

wholly rational grounds would, therefore, constructivist have argued, have resulted in rejections.

How, therefore, do constructivists explain the enlargement to the CEECs? Specific positions vary, but in broad terms the main thrust of the explanation is found in social identities, norms and values. For Schimmelfennig (2001), a key part of the explanation for why the admittance of CEECs was granted is found in 'rhetorical action', which describes how actors come 'to focus on their collective identity and honor their obligations as community members' (p. 63). In the EU context, the collective identity and the obligations are seen by Schimmelfennig as involving a commitment to the integration of all liberal European states. As soon as some EU-15 states (for quite rational reasons) began to press for enlargement to CEECs, other – less enthusiastic – states became swept up in a rhetorical commitment, which led to a 'rhetorical entrapment' involving a process of virtual drift toward a policy commitment they did not at heart support. 'By argumentatively "entrapping" the opponents of a firm commitment to Eastern enlargement, they [the supporters of enlargement] brought about a collective outcome that would not have been expected given the constellation of powers and interests' (p.77).

Sjursen (2002) is similarly persuaded of the importance of values in explaining the enlargement to CEECs, but for her the key values were not so much ones of liberal-democratic political rectitude but more ones of 'kinship-based duty' (p. 508). On this basis, the 2004 enlargement is to be understood, in part at least, in terms of the existence of a community-based identity 'that drives enlargement towards Eastern Europe and motivates the EU to accept its costs. It shows that the decision on enlargement is the result of an understanding of who the Europeans are and what it means to be European' (Sjursen: 508). This is not to suggest that the notion of what is European is forever fixed and cannot shift. But it is to affirm, as Sjursen puts it, 'that in order to trigger a decision to enlarge, something more than instrumental calculations and something less than a selfless concern for human rights has been at play' (p: 509).

Clearly, similar constructivist explanations can be applied to the Turkish application. They can help explain why in the second half of the 1990s and the early 2000s the EU moved from its preferred policy of being close to Turkey but stopping short of holding out the possibility of membership to giving Turkey a foreseeable membership perspective. The gradually evolving 'upgrading' of language - evidenced in the extracts from European Council Conclusions that were given earlier in the paper - produced a situation that made it progressively difficult for doubters and opponents to backtrack. But the upgrading was gradual and drawn out, which helps to throw light on why the EU has been and is much more hesitant towards Turkey than towards the CEECs. For the fact is that notions of collective identity and kinship-based duty are by no means as strong in respect of Turkey than they were in respect of CEECs. But some such notions – emanating in part from shared membership of European and Western organizations and in part too from empathy with Turkey's liberalizing and democratizing reform programs - would appear to exist to at least some extent amongst many European governing elites.

The Implications of Turkish Membership, Viewed in a Historical Perspective

In the above sections of the paper, many implications of Turkish membership for the EU have been identified. Most of these implications are viewed by the majority of the EU-25 in a negative light, although a few implications are seen as being positive.

That the prospect of Turkish membership should be seen in both positive and negative lights is not surprising. After all, leaving specifics of the Turkish case aside for the moment, this is how all previous enlargement rounds have been seen by existing members, apart from the EFTAn round which was generally viewed as having few drawbacks. But the negatives in the Turkish case are seen by many practitioners and observers as being particularly acute and as making the Turkish application particularly problematical. Two points are worth making about this from a historical perspective.

First, the 1973, the Mediterranean, and the 10 + 2 enlargement rounds were all seen at the time as being highly problematical: in the 1973 round, particularly problems included British budgetary contributions and Commonwealth preferences; in the Mediterranean round, Structural Fund financing and the Common Fisheries Policy loomed large; and in the 10 + 2 round, problems included the unprecedented number of applicants and the fact that virtually all of them had weak economies and underdeveloped political and administrative systems. But notwithstanding these many and varied difficulties, the EU rose to the challenges and found solutions. There is no reason to suppose it cannot do so again in respect of most of the particular problems posed by Turkey. After all, are not resilience and adaptability amongst the EU's most prominent characteristics?

Second, it is inevitable that the more the EU expands beyond its former Western European base the more enlargement will become increasingly problematical. The 'naturals' for EU membership, the countries that could be absorbed with relative ease, are now virtually all members. (The exceptions are Norway, Switzerland and Iceland.) The further east and south the enlargement path is taken, the more the EU will encounter problems of under-developed economies, fragile democracies, weak administrative and legal systems, and variations on 'Europeanness'. But unless the EU's ultimate boundaries are to be defined in some definitive manner, these are problems that will have to be tackled for some considerable time to come. For there is no sign as yet that applications will dry up. Far from it indeed: two of the states of the former Yugoslavia have already applied (Croatia and Macedonia) and other applications from the Balkans can be expected in due course; and it is most unlikely that the European Neighborhood Policy will succeed in its aim of deterring applications from the likes of Moldova and the Ukraine.

Implications of Turkish Membership, Viewed in a Future Perspective

Overall, the balance sheet of the positives and negatives of future Turkish membership of the EU is seen by most policy practitioners as currently being in deficit. However, there are reasons for thinking that by the time Turkey becomes a member – and 2015 is

generally recognized as being the earliest possible year by which this will be possible – the situation will have changed considerably. There are two main reasons for this: internal changes in Turkey and the EU, and the conduct of the accession negotiations.

Internal changes in Turkey and the EU

Many of the projections on the implications of Turkey becoming an EU member are arguably too rooted in Turkey and the EU as they are now rather than as they are likely to be when membership is attained. If, however, projections are made on the basis of what both ‘sides’ may look like by the time of the accession, then some of the difficulties are likely to, if not to have completely withered, at least to be less problematical and challenging.

This point may be illustrated by taking two key features of the integration process – Europeanization and increased flexibility - and demonstrating how one is already bringing about a significantly different Turkey and the other a significantly different EU.

Europeanization. This word is used in various ways, but is generally understood as the process by which the influence of the EU is increasingly penetrating into domestic affairs. More particularly, Europeanization normally refers specifically to the ways in which the political, administrative and legal systems of the EU’s member states and the behavior and actions of the policy practitioners of the states are shaped and conditioned by the EU. Europeanization does not necessarily imply an emerging uniformity of national political structures and actions, but it does indicate a growing intertwining between the EU and its member states and a significant degree of convergence in some areas of activity. (On Europeanization, see, for example: Olsen 2002 and 2003; Radaelli, 2000.)

A key feature of Europeanization is that although it most obviously and most extensively applies to the EU’s member states, it is not restricted to them. So, for example, the countries of Western Europe that are not members of the EU have had little choice but to incorporate significant parts of the internal market *acquis* into their national law. More forcefully, states that aspire to EU membership are required to Europeanize in many ways. Even before accession processes formally begin applicants must meet the Copenhagen criteria and generally be able to demonstrate that they can be team players on key EU concerns. Once accession processes are launched, they are focused in large part around applicants being informed of what they must do to meet the EU’s conditions of membership, and then working with the EU - and in particular the Commission - to satisfy the requirements. As Heather Grabbe has observed, an accession process ‘is not about finding common interests between equal partners. Rather, it is about agreeing a timetable for the candidate country to apply the EU’s laws at home’ (2004: 6).

In Turkey, Europeanization is already well under way, largely in response to the EU’s stipulations concerning the political dimensions of the Copenhagen conditions. This is seen most obviously in the many constitutional and legislative changes that have been made since 2001 to align Turkish law with EU values, norms and practices. These

changes, many of which are part of new Penal and Civil Codes, include reforms to the judicial system, stronger protection and rights for minorities, a greater emphasis on the importance of individual liberties, and the abolition of the death penalty. As the accession process moves from its current initial stage into the more advanced stages of screening and then ‘negotiations’, then so will Europeanization increasingly be ‘imposed’ on Turkey as the terms of the negotiating chapters have to be met, as the 80,000 or so pages of EU law have to be incorporated into Turkish law, and as Turkey increasingly participates in EU programs.

Increased flexibility. As the EU has enlarged over the years, its membership has inevitably become more heterogeneous. It has done so both in terms of the objective situations of the member states and their political preferences and choices on matters ranging from the general nature of the integration process to detailed policy issues.

This growing heterogeneity has raised the possibility of the EU becoming increasingly immobilized in terms of its ability to continue to move the integration process forward. To ensure such immobilization has not occurred, two broad strategies have been pursued. On the one hand, the revisions of the treaties that have been undertaken every five years or so since the mid-1980s have made it progressively more difficult for a minority of states to veto actions that have majority support. In other words, there has been a progressive reduction in the number of the types of decisions that require the unanimous approval of the Council and an associated progressive increase in the number that can be approved by qualified majority vote. On the other hand, there has been a developing willingness to not insist that all member states must swim absolutely abreast on all policy matters. That is to say, a more flexible approach has been taken to policy participation.

This flexibility has taken a number of forms, two of which are especially important.

First, there is the open method of co-ordination (OMC), which involves the member states agreeing on general policy goals and instruments but leaving most of the decisions on detailed policy implementation to national determination. Crucially, OMC is not based on legal application but rather on mechanisms such as peer review, ‘shaming’ through league tables produced by the Commission, and encouragement of best practice. Policy areas in which the OMC is currently being utilized include employment policy, several Lisbon Process policies, and – especially for non eurozone states – aspects of EMU. Clearly the more the OMC is developed and used, the more will Turkey be able to ‘slide’ into policy areas that might cause difficulties for both it and the EU if a tight and legalistic approach is taken.

Second, there is differentiated, or enhanced, cooperation. This is where policy initiatives and actions proceed without all EU member states being fully involved, or indeed being involved at all. The most notable examples to date of differentiated integration are Schengen, EMU, and the fledgling European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). It seems likely that this list will expand in the future. There are two firm reasons for this, and one possible reason:

- Differentiation is most likely in policy areas that display certain characteristics, and these characteristics have been, and continue to be, increasingly present as the EU's policy portfolio grows. The policy areas include: those that are not directly related to the internal market; those that are strategically important for some states; those that are of concern only to some states; and those where member states favor different regulatory styles (Junge, 2002).
- The Amsterdam Treaty made specific provision for enhanced cooperation and the Nice Treaty has made it easier to operationalize. Whereas under the Amsterdam provisions 'at least a majority' of member states must be involved for enhanced cooperation to be able to proceed, under the Nice provisions only a 'minimum of eight' must be so.
- If the Constitutional Treaty is not ratified by any member state or states it is likely that more pro-integrationist states will proceed with policy developments in specific areas and leave the non ratifiers outside. The notion advanced in some Eurosceptic quarters that non ratifications will mean the end of the Treaty is probably illusory. Of course, much will depend on which member states do not ratify – non ratification by France, for example, will be more damaging for the Treaty than non ratification by the Czech Republic. Certainly in the case of the state that is seen as being the most likely to not ratify, the UK, it is highly probable that non ratification will encourage some member states – probably led by France and Germany – to press ahead by themselves with ever closer union in some areas. (On the possible consequences of a UK 'No', see Grant, 2005)

The more differentiation does develop in the years prior to Turkey's accession, then clearly the greater is the potential for Turkey to become an EU member without necessarily involving itself, or at least involving itself fully, in 'unsuitable' or 'difficult' policy areas.

The conduct of the accession process

As was noted above, the requirements of the accession process are such as to make extensive Europeanization unavoidable. But in addition to the facilitating impact of Europeanization in easing the impact on the EU of Turkish membership, there are also other aspects of the accession process that should make the admission of Turkey less problematical than it might appear at present.

The most obvious aspect is that the accession process clearly will be extremely protracted. There will, therefore, be considerable time for both Turkey and the EU to make what are deemed to be the necessary *possible* adjustments. (Of course, some critics of the decision to open accession negotiations attach importance to matters where extensive adjustments will not be possible, or arguably even desirable: identity questions, for example, and cultural attitudes.) Indeed, the process will be by far the longest accession process in the history of enlargement. In terms of the period between the submission of a membership application and accession, Turkey is already well 'in the

lead' even though membership negotiations have yet to be opened. (The next longest periods are the thirteen years and ten months for Cyprus and Malta, followed by the ten years and one month for Hungary and Poland.) The existing longest periods between the formal opening of accession negotiations and accession are the seven years and three months for Portugal, six years and eleven months for Spain, and the six years and two months for the 'first wave' CEECs and Cyprus. Assuming the negotiating stage opens with Turkey in October 2005, it is unlikely that the negotiations will be completed before 2013. Indeed, this minimum time period is virtually built into the process, with the Commission making it clear that it will not be possible for the negotiations to be completed until the EU has agreed on its financial perspective for the period from 2014 (European Commission, 2004a: 10). And then there is the gap between the closing of the negotiations and final ratification, which could be extensive and by no means assured of success given the controversial nature of the matter. (The commitment by the Austrian and French governments to holding national referendums on Turkish accession may well be but the first early sign of major ratification problems.)

Another aspect of the accession process that is likely to ease possible problems for the EU is that it is clear the EU will not only take lengthy steps to protect itself but also, if necessary, unprecedented steps. This is evident from the Commission's October 2004 recommendation on the Turkish application and the December 2004 European Council's Conclusions on the application which were based on the Commission's recommendation (European Commission, 2004a; European Council, 2004). The recommendation and Conclusions are studied - in a fashion and to a degree that has not been seen with other applicants - with warnings to Turkey about how dependent progress is on Turkey continuing on its reformist path. Indeed, the Conclusions explicitly state - albeit in a manner less explicitly directed toward Turkey than was the case in the Commission's recommendation - that negotiations may be broken off if there are any major reversal in Turkey's reforms:

In the case of a serious and persistent breach in a candidate state of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law on which the Union is founded, the Commission will, on its own initiative or on the request of one third of the Member States, recommend the suspension of negotiations and propose the conditions for eventual resumption. The Council will decide by qualified majority on such a recommendation, after having heard from the candidate state, whether to suspend the negotiations and on the conditions for their resumption. (European Council, 2004: 8).

The Conclusions also stated - again for the first time in respect of any candidate country - that the negotiations 'are an open-ended process, *the outcome of which cannot be guaranteed beforehand*' (emphasis added) (p. 7).

And, in yet another breach with precedent, the Conclusions not only anticipated the possibility of long transitional periods and derogations in some areas, which are common enough, but also stated that 'permanent safeguard clauses, i.e. clauses which are permanently available as a basis for safeguard measures, may be considered. The

Commission will include these, as appropriate, in its proposals for each framework, for areas such as freedom of movement of persons, structural policies or agriculture' (p. 7).

Concluding Remarks

The Turkish accession process that is scheduled to formally begin in October 2005 clearly will be protracted and difficult. It will be so for a combination of reasons, some of which are similar to the reasons that made the pre-May 2004 accession processes relatively long and some of which arise from the distinctive nature of the Turkish case. The similar reasons include the sheer volume of detailed and technical matters that need to be covered and the many adaptations that Turkey will have to make - some of which will be financially costly - to be able to incorporate the *acquis* and to put in place administrative systems that will satisfy the EU states. The distinctive reasons stem from the wider political, economic religious, and cultural concerns about the Turkish application, which are likely to incline those member states that harbor doubts about whether the accession membership should be proceeding at all to ensure the accession process is taken at a cautious, not to say drawn-out, pace.

The prospect of Turkish membership does pose an unprecedented challenge for the EU and most EU states would - if they were in full control of events - prefer not to be proceeding towards probable Turkish accession. But that said, the fact is that Turkey does have much to offer the EU. Furthermore, there is every reason to suppose that as both Turkey and the EU continue to evolve over the period before Turkey actually assumes membership – which is likely to be a minimum of twelve years or so – many of what may now seem to be major obstacles will gradually be seen to be less daunting.

Endnotes

1 Parts of this section draw on pp. 39-41 of Nugent (2004).

2 Parts of this section draw on pp. 7-9 of Nugent (2004)

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Table 1
Attitudes of EU-25 governments towards Turkish membership in the period leading up to the December 2004 European Council meeting

Positive	Neutral	Unenthusiastic	Negative
Greece Italy Spain Sweden UK	Belgium Czech Republic Estonia Finland Germany Hungary Ireland Latvia Lithuania Luxembourg Malta Poland Portugal Slovakia Slovenia	France Netherlands Denmark	Austria Cyprus