



TURKEY AND EUROPE: UNDIVIDED BUT NOT UNITED

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This article presents Turkey-Europe relations starting with the 19th century up to the present day with a view to understanding the developments that shaped current EU policies toward Turkey. It also pays special attention to the Turkey-EU Customs Union Decision. After making an overall assessment, the author makes some suggestions concerning Turkey's future relations with the EU. The article concludes that despite strong Turkish desire to join the EU, potentially Turkey is the last country in Europe to expect membership in the EU due to economic, political and, especially, cultural reasons.

"The West has always been prejudiced against the Turks ... but we Turks have always consistently moved towards the West ... In order to be a civilized nation, there is no alternative"

Kemal Ataturk (1)

The statement above explains very well the logic behind the Turkish search for EU membership. For the founders of modern Turkey, the transition from the theocratic-oriented Ottoman Empire to a modern, secular Turkish Republic was to be achieved through "Westernization," which was understood to be a process of emulating and eventually becoming a part of Western civilization. For Ataturk, this meant becoming a part of Europe.

This article examines Turkey-Europe relations starting with the 19th century up to the present day. First of all, adopting an historical perspective, the author explores the historical background of the relations between Turkey and the main European organization (the European Community, EC, and later the European Union, EU) with a view to facilitating the understanding of present relations. The second part analyzes current EU policies toward Turkey's candidacy for membership, with special attention to the Turkey-EU Customs Union Decision and recent developments. An overall assessment and some projections for the future of EU-Turkey

relations constitute the central points of the final part, in which the author also makes some suggestions concerning Turkey's future relations with the EU. The article concludes that in spite of the fact that Turkey strongly desires to join the EU, she is potentially the last country in Europe to expect membership in the EU due to economic, political and, especially, cultural reasons.

Relations between the Turks and the Europeans go back to the arrival of the Ottomans in Asia Minor in the 11th century. Throughout the period from the 11th century up to the present, four turning points may be identified in the course of those relations: the Paris Conference of 1856, the establishment of Republic of Turkey in the early 1920s, the Treaty of Rome and application of Turkey for EC membership in the late 1950s, and finally the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s. Let me focus on these one by one.

"The identity of 'Europe,'" Professor Meltem Muftuler-Bac has written, "is based on a common cultural heritage, with foundations in ancient Greece, Christianity, and Europe of Enlightenment..."(2) Turks have been a part of Europe *geographically* since their arrival in the 11th century; *economically* since the expansion of trade routes in the 16th century; and *diplomatically* since the inclusion of the Ottoman Empire in the Concert of Europe in 1856.(3) The Ottoman Empire and the

European system of states began to emerge simultaneously. The two were separated by religion, culture and politics, and they were constantly at war. For the Europeans, what the Turks represented was all that was rejected in the European identity: "savage, barbarian, despotic, oppressive, violent, and a threat to European civilization." (4)

A leading Turkish intellectual indicates this situation as follows: "Even if we burn all the Korans and tear down all mosques, we are Ottomans in the eye of the European. Ottoman to them means Islam, a dark, dangerous, hostile crowd." (5)

In the early 17th century, the Ottomans fell behind the Europeans, which forced the Ottoman elite to initiate a process of "Westernization." Therefore, from the beginning, for the Turkish elite, "Westernization" was just a tool to upgrade their power; that is, it was adopted on pragmatic rather than ideological grounds.

The Ottoman Empire was implicitly accepted as a European power in 1856 when it was included in the Concert of Europe due to its alignment with France and Britain during the Crimean War. For the first time, Europeans formally recognized the Turks as a part of the European society of states, although this change was totally restricted to state-to-state relations and had nothing to do with cultural issues.

The second turning point came with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in the early 1920s. Until that point, the cultural aspect of the Westernization project had been carried out by Europe-educated intellectuals and there had not been a total rejection of the past, especially by the state. However, from that time onwards, the state took on the task of converting Turkey into a modern Westernized nation. (6)

The Treaty of Rome and Turkey's application for EC membership constituted the third turning point. Until that time, relations had been conducted at a state-to-state level within an intergovernmental framework. These two developments, however, enormously changed the nature of the relationship, which

now acquired a supranational character and was no longer only between the Turkish *state* and European *states* but also between Turkish society and European ones, too. At that time, this new dimension was ignored mainly due to Cold War circumstances but re-emerged with the end of Cold War, which therefore formed the fourth turning point in Turco-European relations.

The emergence of the Cold War and the Soviet threat in the late 1940s had added an important security dimension to Turco-European relations and underlined Turkey's strategic importance for the West. Throughout the Cold War years, the Europeans thought that Turkey's inclusion into the Western camp did not create many problems as strategic and security considerations relegated the broader issues of culture to a secondary position. Also, the same considerations forced the EC to pursue a strategy of neutrality between Greece and Turkey. (7) For the Turks, EC membership seemed to be a natural outgrowth of Turkey's membership in NATO.

After the conclusion of the Treaty of Rome, Greece applied for associate status on July 15, 1959. There followed a similar request from Turkey on July 31, 1959. Unfortunately, Turkey was unlucky in timing. Turkish application came at a time when the EC had become, under Gaullist pressure, much more inward-looking. Moreover, several EC members, notably France, showed reservations about Turkey's European identity and "cultural" issues. (8) Although the military intervention of 1960 in Turkey led to a delay in negotiations, the Ankara Association Agreement was finally signed on September 12, 1963 and became effective on December 1, 1964.

The EC-Turkey Association Agreement (9) projected three stages for Turkey-EC relations: preparatory, transitional and final. The *preparatory* stage was intended to be a period in which the Community would provide unilateral concessions and financial aid to Turkey while Turkey would take appropriate measures to develop its economy and to prepare

itself for the transitional stage. The *transitional* stage of between 12 and 22 years would aim at creating a customs union between EC and Turkey. The agreement also included the possibility of a third *final* stage, which would bring Turkey to full membership. However, no timetable was provided for this. Although EC was cautious and made it clear that accession was dependent on the realization of some concrete objectives (10), the Turks thought that it was a guarantee for full EC membership.

Contrary to several economic arguments, it was obvious that the logic behind the Turkish application was mainly political and strategic. Turkey desired not to be left behind Greece, which had already signed its own association agreement with EEC. Similarly, the positive response by the Community reflected its strategic concerns to keep Turkey within NATO.

The Additional Protocol of November 13, 1970, in force from January 1, 1973, set out in a detailed fashion how the Customs Union would be established. Hence, it was more important, in practical terms, than the Ankara Agreement. It provided that the EC would abolish tariff and quantitative barriers to its imports from Turkey (with some exceptions), whereas Turkey would do the same in accordance with a timetable containing two calendars set for 12 and 22 years. (11) This document also showed the differences between Turkey's and the EC's reasons for wanting an association agreement. Turkey's Third Five-Year Development Plan and the Additional Protocol became effective on the same day but the ISI (Import Substitution Industrialization) strategy contained in the former was clearly incompatible with the latter.

In addition, despite the agreement, the EC also slowed down the implementation of the transitional stage by restricting the access to the EC market for goods, such as textiles, in which Turkish producers had a comparative advantage. Moreover, the introduction of the EC's GSP (Global System of Preferences) in 1971; adoption of the EC's GMP (Global Mediterranean Policy); and Greek accession all

eroded the value of trade concessions granted by the EC to Turkey. Furthermore, Europeans, especially Germany, soon started to realize what Turkish accession would mean for them, especially regarding the free movement of labor in the post-1973 recession.

During the early 1970s, in line with troubles in the world economic and political system, some problems emerged in Turkey which resulted in political instability, civil unrest and severe economic difficulties. The 1974 Cyprus crisis also hurt Turkish-European relations. The association agreement finally broke down *economically* in the mid-1970s (12) and *politically* after the 1980 military coup d'état. In spite of various attempts to reactivate it in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it remained a dead letter. Relations remained more or less frozen until the mid-1980s when Turkey demonstrated both its stability and readiness to make internal reforms.

During the 1980s, Turkish economy went through major structural changes. ISI policies were replaced by export-oriented ones, accompanied by an extensive liberalization of the economy. The growth of confidence in Turkey's economic performance and democracy together with Prime Minister Turgut Ozal's more outward-looking foreign policy culminated in the Turkish application for full EC membership on April 14, 1987, which came as a surprise both to the EC institutions and member governments. The Turkish request was described, rather diplomatically, as "bold" in Europe and perceived as a tactical move to overcome the deadlock in EU-Turkey relations.

The Commission's Opinion, (13) in essence, underlined Turkey's eligibility for membership but argued that the implementation of the Single European Act, including the objective of completion of the internal market by the end of 1992, must take precedence over any enlargement and therefore the EC couldn't initiate any new accession negotiations before 1993 at the earliest. It also listed a number of more specific obstacles to Turkish membership, which may be summarized as follows:

- Major structural disparities between EC and Turkey
- High levels of inflation, unemployment and industrial protection
- Low levels of social protection
- Inadequate human rights provisions
- Turkey's problems with "one Member State of the Community" (i.e. Greece)

Instead of full membership, the Opinion proposed the intensification of cooperation within the framework of the association agreement with a view to completing the customs union by 1995, while postponing full membership indefinitely. The Opinion crystallized the EC's *economic* and *political* concerns, but it didn't mention *cultural* ones.

The EC had not been prepared for Turkey's application and did not know how to react, which explains why it took 30 months for Commission to prepare its Opinion. In response, the EC finally decided on a new strategy to keep Turkey within its sphere of influence while postponing indefinitely the opening of accession negotiations. In this context, the EC regarded the customs union as a necessary price and tool to keep Turkey pro-European while denying membership.

The Commission's decision coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Cold War began to disappear, a factor that produced growing concern in Ankara that Turkey might lose its privileged status as a strategic partner of the West. The USSR's collapse in the early 1990s eliminated the Soviet threat and, therefore was thought to undermine Turkey's utility to the EC. The 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the Turkish decision to support operations against Iraq changed the environment to a certain degree but Turkey could not overcome the weakness in EC's commitment to her.

In addition to all these developments, issues of democracy and human rights increasingly began to dominate relations between Turkey and the EC. Strategic and security considerations were partially replaced by

political, economic and cultural ones. As Sevilay Elgun Kahraman wrote, "However, Turkish authorities failed to notice the shift in community priorities ... Consequently, they believed that...economic reforms they had been implementing since 1980 would satisfy the conditions for accession." (14) But this was not the case.

In June 1990, the Commission proposed the completion of the customs union by 1995. Despite the complexity of the issues, there was a consensus within the EU that relations needed to be upgraded. By 1993, Turkey's primary focus was on the achievement of the Customs Union, too.

During her presidency of the Council, France, which traditionally had close relations with Greece, prepared a package deal. It promised Greece to open accession negotiations with Cyprus six months after the conclusion of 1996 IGC (Inter-Governmental Conference). In return for this promise, Greece would lift its veto on the fourth financial protocol and the completion of the customs union with Turkey. Talks began in 1994 and were finalized on March 6, 1995 at the Turkey-EU Association Council. (15) It was agreed at the Association Council meeting that a customs union would be set up between Turkey and the EU.

According to the Maastricht Treaty, the agreement with Turkey had to be ratified by the European Parliament. Given its position on Turkey's human rights record, Parliament's ratification couldn't be taken for granted. However, the Europeans thought that if they did not ratify the agreement, Turkey might become disillusioned with the EU and reorient her foreign policy eastward. Therefore, after significant lobbying by many parties, including the U.S. government and Europe's social democrats, the agreement was endorsed by the European Parliament in December 1995; and went into force in January 1996.

The Customs Union involves improved market access to the EU and a one billion ECU aid package, in return for which Turkey would remove its high import barriers to EU goods. According to the Customs Union Decision

(CUD) of March 6, 1995, all industrial goods apart from European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) products (16) would circulate freely between Turkey and the EU. Turkey would also impose the Community's Common Customs Tariff on imports of industrial goods from non-EU countries. Moreover, the CUD requires Turkey to have adhered to all preferential trade agreements of the EU by the year 2001. However, the agricultural commodities remained outside the scope of the Customs Union and the CUD is silent on three issues: the supply of services, the movement of capital, and the movement of labor.

As for implementation of the March 6 decision, with the entry into force of the Customs Union, Turkey abolished all duties and equivalent charges on imports of industrial goods from the EU. Additionally, Turkey has been harmonizing its tariffs on the import of industrial goods from non-EU countries with the EU's Common External Tariff and progressively adapting itself to the EU's commercial policies and preferential trade arrangements with specific third parties. Since the EU had already abolished its tariffs for imports from Turkey, the Customs Union did not bring about a significant liberalization for Turkey's exports to the EU. On the contrary, the dismantlement of trade barriers in favor of the EU led to a surge in imports from Europe, culminating in a steep rise in Turkey's trade deficit with the EU in 1996. On the other hand, although the Customs Union has been a challenge for the Turkish industrial sector, it has not caused insurmountable difficulties. Despite predictions to the contrary, Turkish industry has demonstrated resilience to compete with its EU rivals.

One can argue that the EU was not so enthusiastic to implement the March 6 decision and failed to live up to its obligations. In March 1996, the Association Council, which is vital to overseeing implementation of the agreement, failed to meet in the face of Greek objections. The Fourth Financial Protocol, amounting to 600 million ECU of aid, didn't come into force

due to similar objections. In October 1996, the European Parliament decided to freeze EU assistance to Turkey on the grounds that Turkish government had failed to meet its human rights promises. In short, Greece had used the Community platform to voice her demands and exercise her veto on EC-Turkey integration.

The debate over the March 6 decision raises a number of interesting and revealing points. Those critical of CUD argue that "Customs Union" is just a part of the EU and does not have its own legal personality and independent existence. Hence, a country cannot join the Customs Union without full EU membership. Naturally, the "Customs Union" serves the interests of 15 EU members and decisions concerning it emerge as a result of a bargaining process within the EU. Therefore, if a country, like Turkey, is not an EU member and cannot voice her demands during the bargaining process, the Customs Union may be detrimental to her vital interests.

In short, for the critics, the Customs Union is just an artificial and one-sided system designed to incorporate Turkey within the EU without granting membership. Under the Customs Union framework, Turkey is in a position of "implementer" but not "decision-maker." The system created by the CUD does not bring Turkey closer to equality in the EU but merely makes it dependent on the EU. Due to all these disadvantages, no country apart from Turkey has concluded a customs union with the EU without securing or guaranteeing full membership.

In stark contrast to the views above, others in Turkey support the March 6 decision. They claim that Customs Union would provide Turkey with lots of benefits not only in economic terms but also political ones. The economic benefits that were provided (or, would be provided) by the CUD, they argue, may be summarized as follows:

- The Customs Union will not only crown Turkey's process of integration with the World economy but also help rationalize

and modernize Turkey's economic structure. Moreover, increased competition will improve the efficiency of Turkish firms.

- The opening of the European market will raise Turkey's exports to the EU.
- The Customs Union is expected to give rise to an increased inflow of foreign direct investment.
- The resumption of financial cooperation with Turkey will contribute to the success of Turkey's economic restructuring and to the improvement of her infrastructure.
- All of these will, in the medium and long term, translate into increased employment in Turkey, which will ease social tensions and improve the country's socio-economic situation.
- Improved microeconomic conditions will contribute to the betterment of the macroeconomic situation and help Turkey redress her macroeconomic imbalances.

As for political benefits, they argue that the Customs Union will lead to consolidation of Western values in Turkey, which in turn will contribute to Turkey's efforts to upgrade her democracy. It will also set firmly Turkey on the course of integration with Western Europe. As such, it will provide a concrete foreign policy objective and undermine the influence of those who stand against such a policy.

I agree with the critics about questioning the value of the Customs Union without membership. Greece, Spain and Portugal realized the disadvantages of such an intermediate step and tried to accomplish the objective of full membership without it. As to advocates of CUD, in my opinion, they have misinterpreted the March 6 decision. They believed, in the words of Atila Eralp, that the Customs Union "was intended to lead full membership and supported it ...for that reason. [However,] EU officials viewed it solely as a mechanism to improve cooperation and did not link it to full membership." (17)

Supporters of the Customs Union have claimed that CUD made Turkey the non-

member country with the strongest integration to the EU short of membership, which will lead to consolidation of Western values in Turkey. However, I argue that CUD would not create a process of integration; rather it may result in dependence on the part of Turkey, which may not even be asymmetrical but totally unilateral. In my opinion, however, the main shortcoming of the supporters of the Customs Union is that they have exaggerated the economic benefits. They have claimed that the Customs Union will crown Turkey's process of integration with the World economy but it does so only in those areas where Turkey has no comparative advantage. Agricultural commodities, for instance, were left outside the scope of the March 6 decision. Advocates of CUD may claim that there is still no free trade in agricultural products since Ankara has not taken the measures that would make the basic regulations of the EU's CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) applicable to Turkey's national agricultural policy. However, I argue, these measures couldn't be taken by Ankara without Turkey's full membership in the EU. Such a move without membership may result in a financial burden, which Turkey alone could not carry.

As to expectations regarding increased Turkish exports to the EU, the result was a disaster, which may easily be seen from Figure 1 (18) which reveals that, after completion of the Customs Union in 1996, Turkey's imports from the EU rose by 37.2 percent compared to 1995 and reached \$23,1 billion while her exports, amounting to \$11.5 billion, rose by only 4,2 percent.

The Luxembourg Summit was a turning point for the future of Europe as it outlined the enlargement process of the EU so as to put an end to a "divided" Europe. In July 1997, before the summit, the Commission disclosed a report entitled Agenda 2000 in which it excluded Turkey from the enlargement process. The report repeated the classic political and economic arguments against Turkey and made no reference to Turkey's full membership objective. The decisions of the Luxembourg

Summit reflected by and large the contents of the Commission's Agenda 2000. In Luxembourg, the EU reconfirmed Turkey's eligibility and decided not only to set up a special strategy to prepare Turkey for accession but also to create a special procedure to review the developments to be made. Turkey was also invited to the European Conference but a number of preconditions, declared unacceptable by Turkish authorities, were put forward.

The Turkish Government found the Commission's approach discriminatory and underlined the contrast between the pre-accession strategy devised for other candidates and the "European Strategy" for Turkey, which consisted simply of a set of ideas whose financing remained uncertain. Therefore, it declared, on December 14, 1997, that Turkey would not discuss with the EU issues remaining outside the contractual context of the bilateral relations as long as the EU did not change its attitude. Turkey suspended all political dialogue with the EU.

When the Turkish prime minister didn't show up for the first European Conference in London in March 1998 but instead visited some Central Asian republics, the Europeans began to consider that they should present something concrete to Turkey so as not to lose their influence or leverage there. The answer was to give Turkey a "candidate" status without a timetable for accession. Thus, at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999, the EU agreed to accept Turkey as a candidate for EU membership.

For the first time, Turkey participated as a full member candidate at the European Council meeting held in Nice, in December 2000. At the meeting, Turkey was requested to submit its National Program, based on the Accession Partnership. The real importance of the Nice Summit, however, originated from the fact that the Nice Treaty, signed at the end of the meeting, set out the institutional framework of the EU that will be applied as of January 1, 2005. Contrary to rhetorical statements made in the meeting regarding the importance of establishing closer relations between the EU

and Turkey, all assessments concerning EU's future institutional framework--such as weighing of votes in the Council, number of commissioners and number of European Parliament members--were designed for an EU with 27 members and thus without Turkey being among them. As a consequence of Turkey's efforts to remedy this situation, the EU decided to add a footnote as a face-saving device to the "Protocol on the Enlargement of the Union" which declares that the charts on the institutional framework of the Union take into consideration the candidate countries with which the accession negotiations have already started.

As foreseen in the Helsinki European Council Conclusions, the EU Commission declared an Accession Partnership for Turkey on March 8, 2001. After the approval of the Accession Partnership by the Council, the Turkish Government announced its own National Program for the Adoption of the EU acquis on March 19, 2001.

In line with the assessments made in Nice concerning the EU's future institutional framework, the Göteborg European Council of June 2001 put forward a clear aim: completion of the enlargement negotiations with those countries that are ready for membership by 2004. As for Turkey, apart from usual statements, the EU told (or, ordered) Turkey that she must (not should) implement the economic program agreed with the IMF, an international institution that is in no way part of relations between Turkey and the EU.

The last meeting before the introduction of EU's single currency was held in Laeken, in December 2001. In that summit, to provide a platform for the debate on its future, the EU decided to convene a Convention in which all candidate countries, including Turkey, will take part. Moreover, in Laeken, the EU divided candidate countries into two groups. The first group consists of ten candidate countries (19) with which the EU wants to bring the accession negotiations to a successful conclusion by the end of 2002. As for the remaining two countries, (20) the EU aims at opening

negotiations with them in 2002. However, a country is missing in this '10+2' formula: Turkey. In the Presidency Conclusions, the EU talked about "the prospect of the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey" but the questions "when" and "how" were again left unanswered.

This history and the patterns described above allow for a longer-term analysis of how the EU sees the issue of Turkish membership.

Since 1997, the Commission has submitted Regular Reports to the Council on further progress achieved by each candidate country. In general, the regular reports have underlined that although some progress has been made that Turkey has not yet fulfilled the "Copenhagen criteria." (21) In short, they mention Turkey's inability in the realization of *political* and *economic* criteria, without making any reference to *cultural* ones.

In its other formal documents as well, the EU divides the obstacles that prevent Turkey's accession to the EU into two: *political* and *economic*. In terms of economic obstacles, the EU cites Turkey's insufficient economic capacity and macroeconomic instability. Moreover, from time to time, it refers to the fact that Turkey would require substantial financial compensation from the EU so as to meet the level of EU economies, if she is to be a full member of the EU. Furthermore, the EU fears a major influx of Turkish job-seekers as a result of Turkish accession to the EU.

As for political obstacles, the EU refers to Turkey's problems with Greece in the Aegean Sea and the divided status of Cyprus since 1974. It also pays attention to the weakness of Turkish democracy and the Turkish military's extensive influence in political affairs, and criticizes Turkey for having a low respect for rule of law and human rights. In addition, since Turkey already has a larger population than any EU country except Germany and is expected, within a generation, to overtake Germany too, there is an uneasy awareness in Europe of the fact that Turkey could be the most populous nation within the EU, with all the associated voting powers (22) in the Council of Ministers

and the European Parliament.

The demise of the Soviet Union offered an opportunity for Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) to "return to the Europe," adding a *cultural* dimension to the process. Also, the replacement of the ideological East-West conflict by ethnic, religious and historical conflicts emphasized Turkey's non-Christian, and hence non-European, character. (23) Therefore, the newly freed countries of Eastern Europe have been able to jump the line before Turkey which is not, unlike CEECs, regarded as a natural member of European 'family'.

Turkey signed an association agreement with the EC in 1963, 30 years before the Czech Republic signed a similar agreement; and submitted its formal application for membership in 1987, seven years before Poland's and Hungary's. Also, as Muftuler-Bac writes, "Turkey has a more developed market economy than most of these countries and its political problems are no worse than those of many of the other applicants." (24) However, out of 13 recognized applicants, Turkey remains the only country that is not yet visibly on the track to membership.

Therefore, there must be another criterion, apart from politics and economics, which explains Turkey's perpetual place in the waiting room. This criterion is culture. At the Luxembourg Summit, in addition to economic and political ones, the other factor that contributed to Turkey's exclusion from Europe was the perception of Turkey as culturally different, although it was missing in the Presidency Conclusions of the Summit. Given the fact that when Morocco applied for full membership, she was turned down by the Council on the grounds that she is not a European country; one can ask why does not the EU tell Turkey simply: Your hopes for full EU membership are in vain due to questions concerning your Europeanness?

The answer to that question lies in the fact that the EU has some indispensable interests in keeping Turkey close to itself if not inside its gates. The Europeans fear that if they turn Turkey down, she may adopt, as a reaction,

some policies in conflict with European interests. Also, the EU cannot openly admit the reasons behind its behavior because these run counter to the EU's own principles. As *The Economist* put it: "The EU is [expected] to be a liberal organization, based on rational, non-discriminatory principles. It cannot say [to Turkey]: 'We won't let you in because you are mainly Muslims.'" (25)

The main motive behind the EU's efforts to keep Turkey within its sphere of influence is the fact that there are some strategic as well as economic gains to be derived from cooperation with Turkey. First of all, as a large and rapidly expanding market, Turkey offers lots of business opportunities for EU companies. Also, located at the crossroads of Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East, Turkey has the potential to act as a major link between these markets. Thanks to the Customs Union, EU companies are able to use Turkey as an export base for Eurasia and the Middle East.

In regards to strategic considerations, although the Soviet threat disappeared, Turkey's strategic importance for the EU remains. The EU needs Turkey's cooperation for its efforts to keep the peace and stability on Europe's southeastern flank, including facing problems with ongoing conflicts in the Balkans, Caucasus, Iraq and the Middle East generally. Therefore, it is in the EU's best interest to ally itself strongly with Turkey. Turkey also has a unique location that could connect the main energy sources of both Middle East and Central Asia to Europe. Furthermore, a Turkey left alone might be prey to radical Islamic forces and thus might turn out to be a factor of instability and a threat to Europe's southeastern border.

In the final analysis, it is already clear that even if Turkey eventually meets the political and economic criteria for membership, an important bloc within the EU will continue to oppose its membership on cultural grounds. For the Europeans, the EU and Turkey shouldn't be "united" but, at the same time, they must be "undivided."

Given this context, three options have been

(and will be) available to the EU in its relations with Turkey. First, the EU may grant full membership to Turkey but is reluctant to do so given perceived *cultural* differences and massive *economic* and *political* problems.

Second, the EU may totally reject Turkish application but again, the strategic and economic considerations mentioned above make explicit rejection unlikely.

The third option, which I call "keeping close," was developed by the EU after the Turkish application for full EU membership in 1987 and became fully used at the Helsinki Summit of 1999. This new strategy grants Turkey a road map toward full membership without a "pre-accession strategy." Since this approach leaves the questions of "when" and "how" for Turkey's membership unanswered, it is seen as the most feasible way to solve the "Turkish problem." Therefore, today, Turkey is the only country included in the enlargement process but not given a pre-accession strategy. Also, in view of the fact that Turkish politicians do not seriously consider anything as a real long-term alternative to membership in the EU, the Europeans believe that they can delay Turkish accession for the foreseeable future with little fear of Turkish reaction.

The EU will likely continue subjecting Turkey's membership to additional political and economic preconditions in the future. If Turkey reacts to these new preconditions and the possibility of "losing" Turkey emerges, the EU will seek some other real or formal, but limited, benefit to Turkey like some limited form equivalent of membership but without associated powers such as 'veto' rights in the European Council.

The redefinition of Europe's identity along cultural lines means that Turkey will not be a part of Europe, or the EU, in a real sense as the former does not have a shared culture with the latter. Therefore, it seems that the Turks have reached the fifth turning point in their relations with the Europeans. Turkey now badly needs to develop some new, more realistic policies regarding her future relationship with the EU.

Actually, Turkey's exclusion from the EU is

not, in my opinion, an inherently bad thing. By not being fully inside the EU, Turkey leaves itself more room to take on a role as an independent actor and status as a regional center in its own right. Also, she can strengthen a role as a bridge-builder between different cultures instead of placing itself only in one camp. Such a solution allows Turkey to intensify its relations with neighboring states in the Caucasus, the Middle East and Central Asia, as well as its relationship with the United States. This does not mean that Turkey can or will seek a leadership role in the Middle East or Black Sea region or attempt to establish a Turkic commonwealth. It simply means that Turkey will try to work with and benefit from opportunities in all these areas.

Another way to approach the situation is that the EU itself is gradually turning into a series of overlapping clubs. Membership of some clubs (e.g., the internal market) will be compulsory but that of other clubs will be optional. For instance, a country, such as Britain, may opt to play a leading role in foreign policy and defense but stay out of monetary union, or the other way around. This new characteristic of the EU allows Turkey to choose the type and degree of the relationship that she would have with the EU.

For example, Turkey might develop a strategy based not on seeking membership as a thing in itself but rather choose the precise types of relationships it wants or does not want. Thus, Turkey could reduce the Customs Union to a Free Trade Area, which would enable Turkey both to have close economic ties with the EU and to pursue an independent foreign policy at the same time, as does Norway.

Moreover, if necessary, Turkey should adopt assertive policies towards the EU. Since the EU does not want to “lose” Turkey, Turkey has more leverage than it perhaps has recognized in negotiating with the EU. It is certainly not in Turkish interests to break away from the EU, which will always be a major trading partner (26) and source of technology and investment for Turkey. But this does not mean that Turkey has to be timid in the bargaining process.

Bruce Kuniholm has suggested that one aspect of the EU membership process has been to help Turkey make internal reforms. He writes, “The only really successful reforms in Turkish history have been in the context of a response to outside pressures or incentives. In this sense, the question of accession to the EU is an opportunity to get done what the Turks cannot do on their own.” (27) Without rejecting this idea, however, it could be argued that if Turks are disappointed in treatment by the EU—including the withholding of full membership—this could have a boomerang effect. The most stable and lasting reforms are likely to arise from Turkey’s own internal dynamics.

Despite tremendous obstacles, neither Turkey nor the EU can afford a break between them. As EU membership would mean realization of its historic goal of Westernization, Turkey is unlikely ever to surrender its aspiration to full membership. Given the high stakes involved, the EU is also unlikely to rule out publicly the possibility of eventual Turkish membership. Yet a realistic assessment must begin with the realization that, not without reason, European states and the EU are anxious to delay the process of Turkey’s integration with the EU for as long as possible and keep Turkey at the back of the accession queue.

However, one should keep in mind that there is not a single dynamic of European integration. The process has been a multi-faceted, multi-actor and multi-speed one in which not only national governments but also social institutions, interest groups, and even extra-regional actors, such as the United States, are involved. One day, some within the EU may soften the cultural criteria and let Turkey join in the belief that membership will help Turkey progress while Turkish membership will help transform the EU into a truly multi-cultural, multi-religious entity, which was one of the most significant aims of the EU’s founders.

Figure 1 (in billion \$)

Turkey's Foreign Trade with EU						The EU's Share in Turkish Foreign Trade (%)	
Years	Exports	Change (%)	Imports	Change (%)	Exports	Imports	
1993		---	12.9	---	47.5	44.0	
1994	8.6	18.5	10.2	-20.6	47.7	44.2	
1995	11.0	28.3	16.8	64.0	51.2	47.2	
1996	11.5	4.2	23.1	37.2	49.7	53.0	
1997	12.2	6.1	24.8	7.5	46.6	51.2	
1998	13.4	9.7	24.0	-3.1	50.0	52.4	

Source: T.C. Undersecretariat of Foreign Trade

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NOTES

1. William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000* (Frank Cass Publishers, London, 2000), p.38.
2. Meltem Muftuler-Bac, 'Through the Looking Glass: Turkey in Europe', *Turkish Studies* (Vol.1, No.1, Spring 2000), p.26.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p.27.
5. Cigdem Nas, 'Turkish Identity and the Perception of Europe', *Marmara Journal of European Studies* (Vol.9, No.1, 2001), p.184.
6. John Redmond, *The Next Mediterranean Enlargement of the European Community: Turkey, Cyprus, and Malta?* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Brookfield, Vt., USA: Dartmouth, 1993), p.21.
7. This neutrality policy became less trustworthy after Greece's accession to the EC in 1981. Though it was a condition of accession that Greece would not prevent the improvement of the relations between EC and Turkey, once Greece obtained membership, she did.

8. Redmond, *op.cit.*, in note 6, p.25.

9. The 1963 Agreement was less generous than that with Greece thanks to France and Italy's efforts, and Turkey's lower level economic development compared with that of Greece.

10. Article 28 of the Ankara Agreement states: 'As soon as the operation of this Agreement has advanced far enough to justify envisaging full acceptance by Turkey of the obligations arising out of the Treaty establishing the Community, the Contracting Parties shall examine the possibility of the accession of Turkey to the Community.'

11. See the web site of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Relations between Turkey and the European Union', <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/adab/relations.htm>>.

12. Turkey formally requested a five-year freeze in its commitments in 1978.

13. The Commission's Opinion was completed on 18 December 1989 and approved by the Council on 5 February 1990.

14. Sevilay Elgun Kahraman, 'Rethinking Turkey-European Union Relations in the Light of Enlargement', *Turkish Studies* (Vol.1, No.1, Spring 2000), p.5.

15. The Association Council is the highest-ranking organ of the association and is composed of the Foreign Ministers of Turkey and the 15 EU Member States.

16. ECSC products were dealt with separately

through a free trade agreement that came into force on 1 August 1996.

17. Atila Eralp, 'Turkey and the European Union in the Post-Cold War Era', in Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayari (eds.), Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute For Near East Policy, 2000), p.180.

18. For more details on Turkey's foreign trade with the EU see "Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye" (Ankara: Dış Ticaret Mustesarlığı, Ekim 1999), p.453.

19. Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic and Slovenia.

20. Bulgaria and Romania.

21. In 1993, at the Copenhagen European Council, the EU designed the membership criteria, which are often referred to as the 'Copenhagen criteria'. As stated in Copenhagen, 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;

- * the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

22. For instance, if Turkey were a member today, 87 deputies, out of 626, would represent her.

23. Muftuler-Bac, op.cit., in note 2, p.29.

24. Muftuler-Bac, op.cit., in note 2, p.21.

25. 'The Limits of Europe,' *Economist* (05/19/2001-05/25/2001, Vol. 359 Issue 8222, Special section), p.14.

26. Trade between Turkey and the EU accounts for about 50 percent of Turkey's foreign trade (see Figure 1).

27. Bruce Kuniholm, 'Turkey's Accession to the European Union: Differences in European and US Attitudes, and Challenges for Turkey', *Turkish Studies* (Vol.2, No.1, Spring 2001), p.46.