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No: 04 | May 2011

Turkey: The Elephant in the Room of Europe

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Turkey: The Elephant in the Room¹ of Europe

By Hüseyin Selçuk Dönmez*

Introduction

Turkey's accession process to the European Union (EU) has been a rather challenging issue for more than two decades now. Turkey applied for 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)[2]." By the year 2011, Turkey has been waiting for 24 years to become a member of the EU. No other country in history of the EU enlargement has waited this long to become a member and not managed to become one after a quarter of a century. It would not be wrong to consider Turkey's bid to join the EU as a *unique*[3] case in comparison to the former applicant countries, especially CEECs. As a result of this, there has been a continuous debate about Turkey's application and whether it has been treated differently or not. The aim of this paper is to shed a brighter light on this debate by presenting examples of different treatment towards the Turkish application. Before exploring the reasons of why and how Turkey has been treated differently, there are some key facts worth mentioning while defining Turkey's difference from other applicant countries. What makes these facts important is that they have formed the foundations of hurdles and their justifications for Turkey's possible membership in the EU. These facts will be touched upon prior to a deeper analysis.

The key facts about Turkey can be gathered under the categories of history, population, religion, culture, geographical location, and economy. Turkey has been an active and important player in European politics for the last seven centuries and since the end of the Second World War, it has also been member of many important European and international organizations [4]. Today's Turkey has a population of approximately 77.8 million [5], who are predominantly Muslims. Its constitution does not declare an official religion of the state and strongly separates religion from state institutions, thus, making Turkey the only secular and democratic country in the world with a predominantly Muslim population. In other words, Turkey's population is not just a lot larger than other former applicant countries, but also it is the first and only applicant country with a predominant Muslim population as opposed to Christian populations of former applicant countries. In terms of its geographical location, Turkey is located between the European and Asian continents. Its main territory is located on the Asian side, with a small portion of land on the European side. Out of all these important key facts about Turkey, economy is the most argued one against Turkish membership. Turkey has the world's 15th largest GDP-PPP [6] and 17th largest Nominal GDP [7]. Due to its large population the GDP per capita values, PPP \$13,902 and nominal \$10,206 [8], remain quite low compared to the size of its economy. In the end, for many citizens and leaders of the EU countries, Turkey is historically, culturally, geographically and economically not a part of Europe. Many in the EU argue that "Turkey's accession to the EU would not only represent a major institutional, political and financial burden on the EU, but also hamper its further political and economic integration [9]."

This research report will thoroughly examine the Turkish case to discuss what makes its status unique. In order to do that the Turkish application process will be compared with the application process of Romania which is the second largest applicant country after Turkey with similar application dates and economic features. Comparative analysis of various theoretical approaches will shape the empirical case studies- emphasizing the specificity of Turkey's instance. This paper will be divided into two main parts. In the first part, rationalist and constructivist approaches will be examined with regards to member states' attitudes towards the Turkish application. The second part provides a comparative analysis of the negotiation processes between Turkey and CEE Countries that will be examined under politico-economical and socio-cultural aspects. The final part brings the main points of the report and concludes it by giving some suggestions for the future studies.

I. Theoretical aspects

The two rival or competing theoretical approaches in defining the EU enlargement politics, according to Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, are rationalist and constructivist -or sociological- institutionalism [10]. These two approaches deba-

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te over explaining the reasons behind a country's, member or applicant, decisions on the enlargement politics. Although enlargement is a two-sided process, a) a state deciding to apply and b) member states deciding to admit, this paper focuses only on the latter side. A thorough assessment of those two approaches constitutes a core to the understanding of motives behind the member states' stances over Turkey. First, it is imperative to briefly explain what exactly rationalist institutionalism and constructivist institutionalism mean and how they approach the enlargement question. For rationalist institutionalism, institutions are only good for serving the actors', in this case member states, individual and selfish material interests [11]. On the contrary, according to the constructivist approach member states' decisions on enlargement issues are based on predetermined concepts such as a common European identity, certain rights and values shared by the union members [12].

After further assessment of the rationalist hypothesis Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier point out that "*expected individual costs and benefits determine the applicants' and the member states' enlargement preferences. States favour the kind and degree of horizontal institutionalism that maximizes their net benefits* [13]." First of all, by horizontal institutionalism authors refer to widening –of the EU- as opposed to deepening, which is vertical institutionalism [14]. Then it indicates that a member or an applicant country would be willing to proceed with enlargement if that enlargement would prove materially beneficial for that country. For instance, a member country X would be willing to support membership of a country Y, if the country X was sure of obtaining material gains upon the country Y's membership. The same reasoning applies for the applicant country as well. To sum up, the whole enlargement process, according to rationalists, is based not on the European Union's interests, but on purely selfish state interests.

The empirical gap in the rationalist explanation is the time frame. In other words, material cost/benefit assessment for a given member or applicant country can have different results in the short, medium and long term. This can very well affect countries' enlargement policies. For instance, Turkey, if it becomes a member, will not be able to enjoy all the benefits of becoming a full EU member immediately, not because of any different treatment special to Turkey, but because the system was set up like this. Limitations for new member states vary, for instance "*the applicants will also have to accept special provisions related to some areas of European integration, including long transition periods for certain benefits such as the free movement of labour and equal access to the EU's agricultural subsidies* [15]." Applicant countries will "*wait for up to seven years after accession before their citizens enjoy the right –at least in the abstract- to live and work anywhere in the EU* [16]." As a result, there are two important questions that were not answered by the rationalists, (a) based on which term, i.e. short, medium or long, a member or an applicant country calculates its cost/benefit ratio and (b) again based on which of these terms these states make their decisions?

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It is vital to keep in mind these short-comings of the rationalist explanation when examining the Turkish negotiation process. Answering these questions is a prerequisite for the second part of this paper. Starting with the first question, one has to think about how different short and long term cost/benefit ratios can be. Prior to the 2004 enlargement, Moravcsik and Vachudova assumed that “Poland may turn out to be France’s greatest nemesis in the competition for agricultural subsidies, but after the entry, Poland could presumably also be France’s staunchest ally in preserving a generous CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) [17]” There are many cases like this where countries may have conflicting interests at one point and work together towards a common goal at a later stage. As rationalist approach suggests, benefits of enlargement should always be more than the costs for either side to continue and complete the accession process. For the second question it is important to realize that cost/benefit ratios vary over different time periods. As a result, decisions will also vary in accordance with the time periods they are based on. Since such decisions are made by politicians, short-term benefits might be more influential than long-term benefits or a government may be willing to endure short and medium-term losses over long-term benefits. Since negotiations for membership are a long process, long term benefits should be the ones that politicians focus on. In some cases they tend to focus on short-term benefits. Jessica Giandomenico considers such decisions as problems and claims that it happens because of “the short time-horizon of politicians [18].” According to her assessment “the horizon is often particularly short when politicians have to show themselves acting on a delicate matter, such as a crisis [19].” In other words, in countries where early elections or dramatic changes in electoral preferences are commonplace, the problem of focusing on short-term benefits can be expected.

Thus, domestic policies in some cases may have bigger impacts even considering the restrictions on foreign policies. For instance, Turkey still has not officially recognized the Republic of Cyprus. This situation indeed causes problems for Turkey’s membership desires, because it cannot join the organization without recognizing one of its members. To this day, due to high national pressure from the Turkish public no Turkish government has managed to solve this problem. If the rationalist approach to the concept of enlargement is applied to Turkey, then Turkey is expected to drop its stance over Cyprus and work harder towards meeting the Copenhagen Criteria. Simply because, not recognizing an existing EU member state prevents Turkey from enjoying the substantial material benefits of becoming an EU member. In the end, rationalist approach may explain the enlargement process through material cost/benefit ratios of countries, but it fails to take into account the political cost/benefit ratio.

Constructivists demonstrate an approach to the EU enlargement process from a different angle. For constructivists, the rationalist argument of states acting purely selfish on enlargement politics is rejected. Instead, they argue that states

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will make their decisions based on cultural and ideational factors [20]. From a more general viewpoint, applicant and member countries seek for similar elements in each other, such as norms, values, identities and culture. Thus, states according to the constructivist approach are not selfish as rationalist approach suggests, but on the contrary they uphold common rights and values, which are also named in the Copenhagen Criteria [21].

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Constructivists' area of interest, unlike the economic focus of rationalists, has more relevance to the Turkish case, especially on the EU citizens' level. One reason to explain it might be that the European public focuses on Turkey's more visible difference in rights and values than its similarity in economics. Constructivists have much more to say about the handling of Turkey's negotiation process than rationalists, who just focus on material cost/benefit ratio rather than rights and values. The most important empirical gap within the constructivist hypothesis, even in liberal institutionalism in general, is rejection of the EU and its institutions, especially the Commission, as an important actor in the enlargement process. As Lee Miles argues, government executives are not just participants in the EU policy-making process. Importance of the European Commission (EC) with its chief negotiator role in accession talks and European Parliament (EP) with its vital power of ratifying accessions is largely ignored by both rationalist and constructivist approaches [22]. In the next part, when examining the differences in Turkey's negotiations as opposed to the previous enlargement cases, though the real emphasis will be given to member states, importance of the EU institutions will be stressed out.

II. Turkey vs. CEECs

In order to prove that Turkey has been and is still being treated differently; other enlargement cases need to be analysed and compared with the Turkish case. This is the sole purpose of this part of the paper. It is taken into consideration that each candidate country is different from others due to many reasons: such as having different levels of development or different problems with neighbouring countries. What is expected from each candidate country should be the same at least in the theory, but in reality it is not the case. In theory, the EU as an institution should be the only decision maker supervising the accession process and the only accession criteria should be the EU's Copenhagen Criteria. In reality, each EU member state has its own criteria and any member state can block or speed up the negotiations by complicating or easing the Copenhagen Criteria. For instance, as it is stated in the criteria, all candidate countries are required to solve any existing problems with their neighbours before joining the Union. Cyprus has voted not to unite with the northern part of the island and still became a member state. On the other hand, many acquis chapters are frozen for Turkey as it does not solve its problems with Cyprus. In the comparisons that will be used in this paper, I will specifically look for certain inconsistent acts of the EU

and its member states. Since Turkey's relations with Cyprus are rather controversial and the problems are still on-going, another less known comparison will be used in this paper: Romania. Rationalist and constructivist approaches will be used to explain differences between the negotiation processes of Turkey and Romania. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, these negotiation processes will be examined under three main categories; political, economic and socio-cultural aspects.

A) Political aspects

In order to compare how Turkey was treated differently in political terms, one has to focus on political aspects of the EU. From a more general viewpoint, answering a question like *what the EU stands for politically* gives a good enough answer: to provide peace through preventing wars in Europe [23]. During the fifty years prior to the establishment of European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951, which created the foundation for the EU, Europe has seen two Balkan Wars and two World Wars which were all started within Europe. It was, after all, imperative to prevent future wars in Europe. For that purpose, old enemies started to form closer ties and almost fifty years after the establishment of ECSC, which then had only 6 members, [24] its successor the EU has united 27 states. In different speeches, former Foreign Minister of Germany Joschka Fischer in 2000, and former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Tony Blair in 2003 made similar remarks and praised the EU as the greatest achievement for peace and prosperity in Europe [25]. When looked at the current member states, of all the participants of the First World War only Turkey, Serbia, -now separately-Montenegro and Russia are left out of the EU. Again out of these four countries, Serbia and Montenegro have applied for the EU membership, but have not received official candidate status yet [26]. Russia has never shown a genuine interest in joining the EU, and does not seem to change this stance in the foreseeable future. Turkey, on the other hand, is left as the only country who has been waiting to become a member since 1987 [27], even before the applications of CEECs. If the EU's political agenda is to prevent wars and provide peace and prosperity in Europe, why then Turkey which has been a major factor in European wars, politics and economies for nearly seven centuries is left outside?

It is important to briefly examine history of EU-Turkey relations. Turkey's dream for becoming an EU member state began in 1963 with the Ankara Agreement with what was back then the European Economic Community (EEC) [28]. Article 28 of this agreement clearly mentions Turkey's accession to the EC, by stating that "the contracting parties shall examine the possibility of the accession of Turkey to the Community [29]." As mentioned before, the EC also accepted Turkey's application while rejecting Morocco's on the grounds that the latter was not European [30], which can be concluded that Turkey then is European. If it was not, its application should and could have been rejected likewise [31]. To-

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day the situation seems to have changed for Turkey from being a European state with all its ties and roots in European institutions, to a partner for Europe. Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel recently stated this change in Turkey's status emphasizing that "the rules of the game have changed [and] the (accession) negotiations are an open-ended process [and] we should now pursue this open-ended process [32]." She even further assessed the situation, suggesting that "Turkey's integration with the bloc does not have to be a full membership [33]." Member states like Germany who oppose Turkey's membership have come up with a unique plan: a privileged partnership instead of full membership. In history of the European enlargement, for the first time a candidate country has been offered something other than full membership and no one knows what this privileged partnership contains [34].

Political opponents of Turkey's membership aspirations, base their arguments on the ground that democracy, human rights, the rule of law, religious and political tolerance is not on par with that of European levels. Human rights abuses, especially mistreatment of minorities, in Turkey seem to be a common concern for both European politicians and the European public [35]. The European Commission has many times reported similar minority issues in Estonia and Latvia regarding the integration of Russian-speaking non-citizens [36]. There were no concerns on the public level and no attempts to block or suspend the negotiations with these countries. Of all the CEECs, Romania particularly, with its ethnic Roma (Romani, Gypsies) population is a proper comparison example for Turkey with its ethnic Kurdish population. As early as 1997, European Commission started publishing reports about the serious human rights violations in Romania against the ethnic Roma population. One of these reports states that "the Gypsies, who account for a considerable percentage of the population (1-1.5 million, depending on the estimates), are the victims of discrimination in many areas of everyday life. They are quite often assaulted by police officers and members of the public, offences that go unpunished [37]." The reports were published only two years after Romania submitted its application in 1995, and logically it can be considered too early to make substantial changes.

It would be better to look at reports prior to Romania's accession in 2007. In 2005, the European Commission published a comprehensive monitoring report on Romania. Under the protection and integration of minorities section, the report states that "concerning the Roma minority, very limited progress was registered; [...] discrimination against the Roma minority, especially at local level, continues to be widespread [38]." Eight years after the first EC report pointing out the abuse of minorities and human rights violations, same problems kept being reported, but apparently no substantial change was on the horizon, possibly due to a lack of attention from the member states. In September 2006, the commission published a final report on Romania's preparedness for the EU membership, only three months before its accession in January 2007. The report

clearly states that “there are still cases of institutional violence against and assault of Roma. In some cases Roma were expelled and their houses demolished without providing any alternative accommodation [39].” Clearly, ten years after the first reports, violations and abuses were still happening. Even though the commission many times highlighted these mistreatments and violations, no major improvement has been done. A final statement in the same report is crucial to take note of. About the overall human rights violations and abuse of minority rights, the report states that “Romania’s preparations in this area should be stepped up immediately and continued after accession [40].” In other words, this statement acknowledges failure of Romania to meet an important aspect of the EU’s political criteria for accession in time. It is also important to remember that Romania is not the first country to become an EU member without having complete minority rights protection. Prior to the CEECs enlargements, there was no such requirement for minority rights protection, still “the candidates are asked to meet standards that the EU-15 has never set for themselves” [41].

The comparison between Turkish and Romanian negotiation processes, specifically on the political criteria, leads to a simple result: there is a duality or a double standard in these two negotiations. Over the years it has been made clear that “the EU has taken a more rigid human rights policy towards Turkey, because [its] human rights record and treatment of minorities are worse than those in the application countries [42].” Right after its application in 1987, France, Germany and Britain along with the European Parliament started expressing their concerns for lack of respect for democratic institutions and human rights in Turkey [43]. If having problems with democracy and human rights really is the EU’s main motive for delaying Turkey’s application, than it means that Romania must have scored better on democracy and human rights to earn its rightful place in the union. “According to independent evaluations from the years preceding the Copenhagen decision, Romania was, however, classified as less democratic than both Turkey and all the other CEE states [44].” Melanie Ram argues that Romania was in fact the worst applicant country in terms of human rights violations, the country has started benefitting from the EU accession strategy in 1994, even before it applied for membership [45].” These EU benefits included both financial and moral support. Financial support was given to various national programs and NGOs to strengthen democratic institutions [46]. The EU has given Romania its moral support by regarding its membership as a natural ultimate goal [47]. Then, the motive behind delaying Turkey’s application cannot be the lack of rights on the Turkish side, because Romania never experienced such delays having worse scores than Turkey on rights and freedoms. Hence, there might be another reason why Romania had a smoother negotiation process. In all its possibility, the EU might have desired to embrace less democratic and more troubled countries first, with the aim of preventing further complications afterwards. If that was the case, then Romania should have joined the EU before countries like Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary who had better democratic rules with

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lower human rights abuses. Consequently, this undeniable difference in treatments of Turkey and Romania proves that the EU is not on the road to become a rights-based entity.

B) Economic aspects

The discriminatory treatment towards Turkey continues with the economic aspect of its negotiations with the EU. As mentioned before, CEECs like Romania have received proper financial aid from the EU to help them meet the Copenhagen Criteria. Turkey on the other hand, has had many problems receiving the same financial aid. This aid is a legal part of the negotiation process and failing to help a candidate country through financial means, not only delays the requested developments in that country, but also damages credibility of the EU. In one occasion, "a former EU Ambassador to Turkey, Michael Lake, underlined this credibility issue, arguing that the failure by the EU to implement the declared financial aid to Turkey 'continues to damage the Union's credibility' [48]." Right from the start Turkey was not included in the financial aid programs that were aiding the CEECs. These countries received their financial aid from the PHARE [49] program whereas Turkey received its aid from the Euro-Mediterranean (MEDA) program [50]. The difference behind these programs is not in their names, but in the amounts they give to the candidate countries. In order to see this difference clearly, a comparison between Poland, Romania and Turkey can be given. "From 1990 until 2000, the financial assistance allotted to Turkey in absolute terms amounted to approximately 28 per cent of what was given to Romania and 21 per cent of what was given to Poland [51]." Total amounts given to these three countries for the same period of time are also interesting. Åsa Lundgren points out how Romania along with Poland received larger amounts of financial aid than Turkey. According to Lundgren's research from 1990 till 2000 Romania and Poland received 1.5 billion and 2 billion Euros respectively, whereas Turkey received only 427 million Euros [52]. Reasons behind this difference are not that diverse. In fact there is but one reason for it, the European Parliament's decision. "The EP has made the approval needed for implementing the EU's financial commitment to Turkey conditional upon respect for principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law [53]." The EP's decision stands as an adequate example of how the EU uses negotiation process as a leverage to ensure a candidate country adopts certain principles of the union. In this case the EU shows a duality in its treatment of different candidate countries. In the case of Romania, for instance, there is not a single decision of the parliament on Romania with regards to the aforementioned principles of democracy, civil liberties, minorities and human rights violations. Similarly, another CEE country Slovakia had serious problems with democracy, rule of law and protection of human rights, especially the Hungarian minority rights. Neither Romania nor Slovakia has suffered from a suspension of financial aid,[54] but Turkey has.

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Apart from the difference in aid amounts, it is equally important to take note of the economic indicators of CEECs and Turkey. Since the EU decided to include CEECs to its next enlargement in 1993, it would be more productive to examine the economic indicators of Romania and Turkey in 1992. This way it can be seen why Turkey was not included in this enlargement though applied long before any of the CEECs. "In 1992, Turkey had a higher GNP per capita than Romania (\$1,780US and \$1,390US respectively) and also a higher growth rate (+5.0% and -15.1% respectively) and lower inflation (70.1% and 211.2% respectively) [55]." There is no denying that both countries at the time had serious economic problems, but it is obvious that Turkey's economy was in a much better shape, or in better words it was not as downward looking as Romania's economy. The EU decided to include Romania to its enlargement list and started receiving much more financial aid than Turkey. Romania's economy was not yet on the desired European levels seven years after the aforementioned figures were taken. "The Commission's regular report of 1999 maintained that Romania was still neither a functioning market economy nor likely to be able to compete with the competitive pressures of membership of the internal market; nevertheless Romania was invited to begin negotiations [56]."

At this point, one possible reason behind the EU's decision to delay Turkey's candidacy and eventually membership might be the size of the country and its likely effects on the union as a whole, and more specifically on its member states' economies. "The comparison thus suggests that the costs, as well as the gains, of integrating Turkey would probably be higher than for Romania [57]." Based on the rationalist perspective, it would have been expected that the EU would enlarge to Turkey before Romania, simply because the material benefits of having Turkey outweighs that of Romania's. Turkey with its population of almost 78 million would mean millions of new customers for the currently stagnating EU market. Besides, the costs could always be marginalized as the EU has done before in the past in many different occasions. For instance, in 1975 when the British threatened to vote no on a referendum over the continuation of their EU membership, substantial resources were transferred to Britain mainly by France and Germany, [58] because none of the member countries and the EU could take the risk of losing the British market. In a more relevant example, Greece, Portugal and Spain openly threatened to use their veto power over numerous initiatives such the Single European Act, the Maastricht Treaty and they demanded more funds to simply say yes. In the end, all three countries ended up receiving substantial funds [59]. In short, the EU is good at transferring funds to those members who might get financially affected due to any of the Union's decisions. This characteristic of the EU could have been also be utilized if Turkey were to join the union, making the rationalist dream come true: minor costs and major benefits.

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The Gray Area: Concept of Power

There is but one gray area between political and economic aspects that falls under the interest area of both rationalists and constructivists. It is the concept of power or rather the problem of sharing it. As explained in the theoretical part, rationalists claim that member states act based on their material interests and that is why they focus on economic aspects. Constructivists, on the other hand, base their arguments on rights, values and ideas thus they deal with the political aspects of enlargement. The concept of power cannot be examined or explained by just one theory. Power is not a tangible concept, but mostly through power that member states gain financial benefits. It can be the veto power, or well-functioning national institutions' power as in the case of Germany. That is why rationalists can help in understanding the concept of power in the enlargement politics. Still, constructivists can fill the gap in explaining power completely. Although power cannot be listed in the same category with human rights, democracy or civil liberties, it still is a political aspect. After all, power is what makes these political aspects possible. Without political or financial power, the EU's requirement on member and applicant countries would not be met. Likewise, with enough power on their hands, certain member states, may disregard respect for political aspects as in the case of Romania.

The importance and relevance of power for the Turkish application is located within the European Parliament, or rather the power that every member country holds in the parliament. In other words if Turkey with its population of 78 million joins the EU, it will form the second largest group in the European Parliament right after Germany and as estimates show in 2020 Turkey's population as well as its number of possible seats will surpass that of Germany's [60]. Even though the parliament occasionally not considered an important power base within the EU, it definitely holds the power of ratifying all the treaties and such documents. Hence, considering Turkey to hold even the second largest place in the parliament also holds the possibility of many older, but less populous member states not getting what they want out of the parliament. The same parliament has published many reports in opposition to Turkey's membership, thus Turkey's becoming the second strongest group in the parliament would surely be unfavourable for many member states as constructivist might argue. It is very likely that such a development will change the current power balance in the parliament. With a new and powerful player in the parliament, it will be difficult for every other member, be it France or Luxemburg, to pass materially favourable bills without sharing some with Turkey. In other words, as the loss of power in the parliament would also mean a material loss according to the rationalist approach, again many member states would be opposing Turkey's bid to join the EU.

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C) Socio-cultural aspects

Finally, the last discriminatory treatment towards Turkey has been more focused on the alleged sociocultural differences between Turkey and the EU. Socio-cultural aspects are maybe the most contested of the all three parts that constitute the professed European identity and Turkey's Europeanness has been questioned ever since. It is not only difficult to examine if Turkey really is European or not, but it is also very difficult to account for all the European norms and values. I will focus on the empirical examples, speeches and claims of politicians and the public rather than focusing on theoretical or philosophical side of the debate.

Defining a geographical border for the EU has always been a challenge and a source of dispute for the Europeans. Even before deciding on a European border, the very notion of Europe, as Thomas Diez states, is a contested one, both geographically and culturally [61]. The EU continues to grow, but as it cannot keep growing endlessly the line separating Europe from the non-European needs to be drawn at some point at somewhere. In an interview in 2007, French President Mr. Sarkozy, stated his belief that Turkey does not belong to Europe and the reason for that was quite simple: it was located in the Asia Minor [62]. Drawing a border for Europe is not as easy as Mr. Sarkozy puts it out. If he were right, then it would be really difficult for him to further explain how Cyprus and Malta have both become EU members without having any land on the European continent. On the Cyprus case, one and maybe the only plausible explanation can be the difference between the Greek Cypriot identity and the Turkish identity, former being European and latter being non-European. In other words, in order to find where Europe's last frontier lies, the EU seems trying to find where the European identity ends. This is why, according to Diez, while defining what European identity is, it is equally important and beneficial to define what it is *not* and thus create non-European others so that a European border can be found [63]. Turkish identity has been put on a test over political, economic and socio-cultural aspects to see if it is European or not.

Turkey's position in regard to Europe has always been a special and different one. After many centuries of interconnectedness and cooperation in numerous areas, its place in Europe is still not agreed upon, and "much uncertainty prevails within the EU whether Turkey will eventually, or indeed ever, join" [64] the European club. Some European leaders and bureaucrats over the time have shown a particular interest to comment on this very uncertainty. In 1991, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl underlined that the Turkish membership in the EU was not acceptable [65]. Yet in 1994, another German politician Wolfgang Schauble, then head of the Christian Democrat (CDU) and Christian Social (CSU) groups in the Bundestag made a similar, but more to the point statement, saying that

After many centuries of interconnectedness and cooperation in numerous areas, its place in Europe is still not agreed upon, and "much uncertainty prevails within the EU whether Turkey will eventually, or indeed ever, join" the European club.

Although the EU citizens along with their politicians claim that not having a common history and culture with Turkey is the basis of their argument, they themselves do not consider it important enough to be an element of their own European identity.

“Turkey was not part of the Christian-occidental tradition and therefore could not be a member of the EU [66].” Not much has changed since those days, as the two major players of the EU, France and Germany’s heads of governments ardently share opinions of Mr. Kohl. The European public seems to share their politicians’ views on Turkey’s difference in terms of socio-cultural values, even in the newest CEE members. According to a 2005 Eurobarometer survey in the Czech Republic, “half of the Czech population believes that Turkey does not belong to Europe historically or culturally speaking and that this is a major obstacle to Turkey’s accession [67].” If having a common history and culture is that important for the European politician and citizens, than one would expect to see these same values to be regarded as important parts of the common European identity. In a recent Eurobarometer poll in 2009, the EU citizens were asked to define the most important element to make up a European identity, and the results look rather interesting. Common history (24%) and common culture (23%) came in the fourth and fifth places in the entire EU. The first three elements are democratic values (41%), geography (25%) and a high level of social protection (24%) [68]. These results highlight an important point. Although the EU citizens along with their politicians claim that not having a common history and culture with Turkey is the basis of their argument, they themselves do not consider it important enough to be an element of their own European identity.

After presenting how the sociocultural values are used rather differently against Turkey, it is necessary to back these results up with examples. Cyprus is a good one to start with though it is not a CEE country. The divided island country is located even further to the east from Turkey. Cyprus’s “Europeanness was never in doubt during the accession assessments, even though its geographical location (and its culture) makes it a clear member of the Middle East [69].” What made it possible for Cyprus to become an EU member was no other factor than Greece. Through end of the accession talks with Cyprus and other nine applicant countries, Greece made it quite clear that “it will veto the entire enlargement process (ruling out membership for countries such as the Czech Republic and Poland) if Cyprus is rejected at the end of its accession negotiations [70].” In the end, Cyprus has become a member of the EU without a geographical or cultural connection to the European continent and indeed without solving its problems with its neighbours. Cyprus is of course not the only example. The EU has not treated Turkey as a country within Europe, as it has treated Romania. “In a speech on enlargement, Hans van den Broek referred not only to geography, but also to culture, traditions and history, when emphasizing Romania’s belonging to Europe: ‘By its history, geography, traditions and culture, Romania is profoundly European country, which has an important place in our common heritage’ [71].” In reality when all three countries in question, Turkey, Cyprus and Romania, are compared, it will be easier to find similarities among them than with countries like Germany, France and Britain.

After examining the examples of Cyprus and Romania it should be clearer now that the discriminative treatment towards Turkey originates from something that has not been voiced out loud: religion. It has been stressed out ever since, but not directly or explicitly and under the disguise of culture and history. There are still examples that can be found to further strengthen this point. After the fall of the USSR, “the West asked Turkey to act as a ‘role model’ and a ‘big brother’ to the Muslim-dominated states located in the area known as the former Soviet Union [72].” In 1994, Mr. van den Broek praised the importance of Turkey’s Islamic culture by stating that Turkey is an asset to the Union, especially when the EU seeks unity with the Muslim World [73]. Once again, long years in the EU do no change on many things, at least towards Turkey, because ten years after Mr. van den Broek, Mr. Olli Rehn, the next Enlargement Commissioner, was happy to make similar comments occasionally [74]. Finally, it is important to note that many EU politicians repeatedly pointed out the importance of cultural enrichment through the enlargements. Unfortunately, no comments or points have been made about how Turkey could enrich the European culture by becoming an EU member state. Eventually, “instead of pointing at anything that could symbolize closeness, common history or shared culture Turkey is assigned the role of representing difference and ‘Islamic culture’ [75].” The difference of religious belief shows its effects also on the public level and maybe even more in a harsher way. European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) [76] published a noteworthy report focusing specifically on how further negative feelings towards Muslims have emerged in Europe. The report highlights many forms of discrimination against Muslims regardless of ethnic background such as discrimination in housing, education and employment; verbal and physical attacks; disproportional political representation and discrimination in social advancement for young Muslims [77]. The Muslim population in the EU is only 13 million [78] out of the EU general of half a billion people, but still these people are victims of such racist and xenophobic assaults regardless of their ethnicity. This is why the Turkish membership is not desired by most of the EU members, because even many centuries after the Crusades, Europe today still defines its identity first through religion. As mentioned before, Turkey was not seen as a part of the Christian-occidental tradition. Hence, what Europeans point out as difference in culture and history between Turkey and the EU is probably the difference in religion. Although it is a heavy statement to make, I believe it is a fair one after examining, comparing and contrasting Turkey’s negotiation process mainly with Romania, other CEECs and Cyprus to a certain extent.

Conclusion

Through examining the brief history and on-going process of Turkey’s negotiation with the EU, it is shown that there is indeed a different treatment towards Turkey. The study also shows that different treatment is not limited to Turkey,

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but many if not all applicant countries, most of which belong to CEECs, had been treated differently. What marks the difference is that in the Turkish case, this treatment was not in its favour. As a result, it was imperative to study Turkey and search for reasons behind this unfavourably different treatment.

Rationalist and constructivist approaches focus on a broader enlargement view, but their arguments point out to the foundations of the reasons. Rationalists explain the enlargement process through material cost and benefit calculation of each member state. Through simple logic, if an enlargement is profitable, than that specific country will support the enlargement. Constructivists, on the contrary, do not treat countries as egoistical entities, but claim that they shape their enlargement politics based on shared rights and values between applicant and member countries. Put it in a different manner, member states would support enlargement if they can identify themselves with the applicant countries.

These approaches shed light on the empirical data gathered through comparing the Turkish negotiation process with that of the CEECs, particularly Romania. When compared with the two previous enlargements, EU-Turkey relations show clear differences on three aspects: political, economic and socio-cultural. Political aspects are the rights-based aspects such as democracy, civil liberty, human rights and protection of minority rights. Economic aspects are clearly material based. While political aspects are concern of constructivists, economic aspects belong to the rationalist camp. When Turkey is compared with Romania, Turkey scored higher both on economic indicators and on respect for human rights and democracy. As a result, based on the rationalist and constructivist hypotheses, Turkish application should have been chosen over Romania's, but that was not the case. Comparing Turkey with Romania and with Cyprus to a certain extent on the socio-cultural aspects such as common culture, history and heritage, once again it points to discrimination against Turkey. Romania particularly but Cyprus too have more socio-cultural similarities with Turkey than with Germany and France. In fact, it would not be wrong to claim that Turkey has more socio-cultural similarities with Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Cyprus even with Poland than Finland has with Italy or Portugal has with Romania.

After much research, analysis, exploration and explanation, I can say that there are three reasons why Turkey is still waiting and will keep waiting at the EU's doorstep. The first reason is power. Turkey's entry to the EU will disrupt the power structure of the European Parliament. EP is the most and only democratic institution within the EU, thus reducing its already limited powers to lower the effects of Turkish membership in the parliament does not seem plausible. Neither the European public would allow it, nor would the member states want it, because they also use EP as a mean to their ends. According to both rationalist and constructivist approaches, instead of changing the structure or disturb the power balance of the EU, it seems logical and more beneficial to keep Turkey out of the EU.

In fact, it would not be wrong to claim that Turkey has more socio-cultural similarities with Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Cyprus even with Poland than Finland has with Italy or Portugal has with Romania.

The second reason is the absence of a determined supporter in the EU. A few countries so far expressed their willingness to see Turkey become a member. The UK can easily be considered as the most ardent supporter of Turkey, but still it is not as strong for Turkey as Greece was for Cyprus. With a determined member country and good timing, a threat of veto as Greece utilized for Cyprus, could grant Turkey with membership. Turkey lacks such a resolved member state, thus loses an easy entry to the union. The last and the most controversial reason is religion. As discussed before, it is difficult to define a common European culture. If common culture is the common history than Turkey has more right to be a member than Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Hungary for most or all parts of these countries were Ottoman lands for many centuries. None of these nations were more integrated and heard of or had more dealings with other European nations than Turkey over the centuries. If common culture is the common way of living and philosophy of life, it is true that Turkish life style and its traditions look nothing like Germany traditions. Italian life style does not resemble to English, French to Swedish, Polish to Portuguese etc. In other words, if Turkey is left out of the EU due to its different life style and traditions, than EU should resolve itself immediately, because it consists of at least 20 different traditions. As the previous two reasons, the third reason is not an officially admitted one. What the EU officials or European politicians or the European public say as cultural difference is no other than religious difference, because there is no other difference is left in the concept of culture that can justify Turkey's difference from member states.

To further the studies on this subject, it is imperative to be less subjective and more cautious with the collected data. Economic figures of a country do not change overnight, but people's feelings might do. On sensitive areas like value-based aspects, using one survey poll at a given time would certainly lead to a wrong conclusion. For instance, Turkey helping out Greece or Cyprus at a time of crisis improves not only the bilateral relations, but also the image of Turkey on the Greek population and vice versa. Likewise, if Turkish and Greek fighter jets collision over the disputed Aegean Sea might also affect public's opinion unfavourably. Hence, data gathering process should proceed with caution in order not to gather subjective, defective or biased data. In addition, more thorough research on the grassroots level would prove efficiency for the understanding of internal dynamics and the reality of what is actually happening in a country. Simply because any country can play with the numbers to have better economic indicators, or even play nice temporarily, only to return back to how things used to be after the EU accession. Minority problems in Romania and many other CEECs as well as Turkey can be truly grasped this way.

Finally, further research on this subject should be carried on by asking more questions instead of trying hard to find answers to every question. For example,

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As with the cases of Malta and Cyprus and Iceland today, it is obvious that it is not that easy to draw a line on the sand and call it a border, especially when it comes to culture.

just because Turkey is on the south eastern border of the EU, it should not justify any claims for not being European or not being in Europe. As with the cases of Malta and Cyprus and Iceland today, it is obvious that it is not that easy to draw a line on the sand and call it a border, especially when it comes to culture. It is rather important and beneficial to think out of the box on special cases like Turkey. Some questions can be formulated as follows: Would the situation of Turkey's membership be any different if it was located right next to Germany? Would cultural differences still matter if Turkey had a large Christian population, say more than half, if not all? Would Turkey be included in the 2004 or 2007 enlargement if it had a Soviet past just like the Eastern European countries? These questions I believe are quite important in understanding the genuine feelings and opinions of European countries about Turkey's possible membership in the EU and Europe in general.

Notes:

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Footnotes:

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