

Turkey – Ready for the EU?

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Introduction

Following a successful meeting between the prime minister of Turkey, Tayyip Erdoğan and the European Commissioner responsible for the enlargement of the European Union, Günter Verheugen, in Brussels on September 23, the way now appears to be clear for the Commission to make a positive recommendation that the European Union should open accession negotiations with Turkey. It will be for EU Heads of Government meeting in the European Council in December to set the date for the actual start of those negotiations.

This will be a decision of enormous significance for both Turkey and the European Union. Inevitably a debate – at times heated and at times ill informed – has already begun about the wisdom of making Turkey a full member of the Union. Some question whether an allegedly “Christian” EU can or should attempt to integrate a large, relatively poor and predominantly Muslim country. But this ignores the multi-cultural reality of many existing EU Member States and the prospect that a number of countries with significant Muslim populations in the Balkans have already been told they too may join the EU if and when they have achieved a necessary level of democratic and economic progress. Moreover, Islam has for centuries played an important role in Europe’s history: it was a critical factor in stimulating the Renaissance.

The reality is that the EU Member States are secular, multi-cultural democracies which have recognised their mutual collective interest in building a Union based on a significant degree of shared sovereignty. Turkey is showing itself to be a country determined to evolve in the same European direction. There could have been no decision to open membership negotiations without proof that Turkey is undergoing a root and branch reform of its human rights, judicial and democratic performance. In the Commission’s view this progress is sufficient now for those negotiations to begin.

Starting negotiations is one thing. Successfully concluding them will be quite another. It is widely recognised that the process may take a considerable period – perhaps more than a decade. In the meantime there are many issues that both Turkey and the EU need to address to ensure that any eventual enlargement is successful. Turkey needs to maintain progress in economic and political reform: regression would be fatal to its goal of EU membership. The EU as a whole must implement a democratic governance system to ensure that a Union of 28 or 30 or more countries can function effectively – not become a recipe for stagnation or even implosion.

As a contribution to this debate, the European Policy Centre, is pleased to publish this Issue Paper written by Amanda Akçakoca, Fraser Cameron and Eberhard Rhein. They argue the case for seeing Turkey's accession in positive terms - pointing to Turkey's geo-political significance in the region. They insist that the problems Turkey's accession might pose – given both its size and its relative poverty – are capable of being resolved. They insist that by 2015 to 2020 both Turkey and the EU will have evolved significantly in ways that should make it easier to manage Turkey's integration in the Union.

This debate will no doubt continue. The EPC will actively monitor progress in the accession process and will reflect the different perspectives and views generated in this important debate.

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1. Meeting the Copenhagen Criteria: Has Turkey Done Enough to Open Accession Talks?

On December 17, the European Council will make a decision of historical importance: whether or not to start accession negotiations with Turkey. The decision will be based on the recommendations given by the European Commission in its annual Regular Report due to be published on 6 October. The report will focus on Turkey's political, social and economic evolution since December 1999, when the European Council stated that *"Turkey is a candidate State destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate states."*

The Changing Face of Turkey

Turkey has progressively turned into a functioning democracy. Like other young democracies, such as Italy and Spain, Turkey has, in the past 50 years, suffered from continuous governmental instability, a volatile political elite, the lack of western-type political parties and from occasional interference by the military in civilian governance.

However, since Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in November 2002, the political landscape has changed considerably. For the first time in decades, the government enjoys an absolute majority in parliament. This has enabled it to push through a series of reform packages that are without precedence in Turkish history both judged on the speed and the depth of the reform steps. Parliament also demonstrated its independence from the government, when it did not follow the government line on Iraq. Therefore, since 2002, there has been a substantial convergence of the political discourse and style with that of the European Union.

Some people raise the questions: Will this last? Is there a risk that the AK Party will turn into a "religious" party comparable to its predecessor (REFAH)? Is this all a charade to please the political establishment in the EU and achieve the party's and the population's overriding objective of EU membership? Although nobody can give a definitive answer to such concerns, it seems highly unlikely that this could be the case. The changes that have taken place during the last three years are too profound to be reversed. The government's reform programme has the overwhelming support of the population and Prime Minister Erdoğan himself dominates Turkish politics. He is almost certainly the most popular leader Turkey has seen since the late Turgut Özal. It would therefore not be easy for any of the traditional Turkish politicians to turn back the clock and gain support for the traditional type of political and bureaucratic mismanagement. We are witnessing the take-over of power by a young generation of Turks, educated in the west who embrace the mood of both the new commercial elites and the urban masses. The traditional parties will therefore have no

choice but to imitate the AKP in style and substance if they ever want to have a chance of returning to government.

Political Criteria

The Role of the Military

The role of the military, and particularly that of the Chiefs of Staff, has traditionally been a strong one. They have always enjoyed substantial respect from the general public, have considered themselves to be the guardians of a secular Turkey and have not hesitated to establish temporary military rule two times during the past 50 years. The government has stripped the “National Security Council” of its executive functions making its role purely consultative and nowadays largely civilian in membership. However this adjustment does not address the very special situation of the Turkish Chiefs of Staff. Unlike anywhere else in the EU the Chiefs of Staff is an institution *sui generis* whose tasks and competences are regulated by a special law. It is not subordinate to the Minister of Defence but reports directly to the Prime Minister. The Great National Assembly, represented by the President of the Republic, is the commander in chief of the Army. However, in times of the war the Chief of Staff takes over the command from the President. Thus, there is no civilian control over the army in times of war. Although these particularities do not, *per se*, constitute an infringement on the Copenhagen Criteria they still do not conform to the practices of the majority of NATO members and illustrate that the army continues to enjoy a very special standing among the Turkish political establishment. It is therefore not surprising that generals continue to raise their voice – as guardians of secular traditions – on issues that have nothing to do with the country’s security. The informal military network established over decades also continues to influence decision-makers.

Established and deeply ingrained habits do not disappear over-night. However the government and civil society seem to have become sufficiently self-confident and would seem able to oppose any undue interference by the military with the normal political decision making process. However, the EU will have to closely monitor whether the military’s role is susceptible of impairing the government’s functioning.

Human Rights and Freedoms

Turkey’s human rights record has improved dramatically during the last few years. All relevant human rights organisations, whether from the EU or in Turkey, recognise this improvement. Two of the most notable reforms are the abolishment of capital punishment and the right of all detainees to legal counsel (something that does not currently exist even in all EU Member States).

The government has adopted a zero tolerance approach towards torture, which has been clearly reflected by the statistics for deaths while in custody. In 1994, 45 deaths occurred. In 2004 no prisoners have died to date. There remain, however, isolated cases of the security forces acting without due restraint.

A new penal code has been introduced which is due to be approved by Parliament at the end of September. New press legislation has been introduced as has legislation providing for increased minority and cultural rights in broadcasting and education in Kurdish and other minority languages. The Kurdish community in particular has benefited from the government's reform programme with 90% of all Kurds supporting EU membership. However, as Commissioner Günter Verheugen pointed out in September, although the government has made a good start much work still remains to be done – for example, further efforts regarding displaced Kurds to return home.

Since 2001, constitutional equality between men and women has become part of the civil code; the ban on all discrimination based on sex is therefore much easier to enforce. New legislation allows non-Muslims to freely practice their religion. The current debate in Turkey over the government's contentious proposals to make adultery a criminal offence has clearly demonstrated the prevalence of new attitudes in Turkey. Only a few years ago it would have been impossible to see such issues debated so publicly with NGO groups and others. Without consensus within the AKP on the issue and with such strong opposition from civil society, it is highly unlikely that the government will insist on this issue. If it does, however, it will almost certainly be seen as bringing Islamic law into Turkish law and viewed as a step-backwards in the reform process.

As far as one can judge, the Turkish government has understood the message. It is up to civil society in Turkey and the EU to closely monitor the follow-up in the coming months and years and to call the government and judiciary to order, if they tolerate further infringements.

Economic Criteria

Turkey should not find it difficult to pass the economic test in the Copenhagen criteria. It certainly is a market economy, even if some public sector industries continue to exist despite the accelerated pace of privatisations in the last years.

Turkey has equally demonstrated its capacity to withstand competition from EU Member States. This is certainly the case for the entire manufacturing sector, which has to compete with EU industries on an equal footing since the completion of the Customs Union in 1995. Turkey may still find it difficult to fully compete in certain service sectors like

banking or insurance but it has plenty of time to revamp these sectors before possible EU entry.

Conclusion

Turkey has received criticism over the length of time it is taking to implement reforms across the board. However, given the size and diversity of the country it could never have been expected that implementation would happen overnight or that Turkey would turn into a human rights paradise. After all it has taken Europeans decades to attain today's standards. Our assessment is that Turkey has made sufficient progress to open accession negotiations. Clearly it will have to continue the reform process otherwise it could put its future accession in jeopardy.

2. Economic Implications

Turkey's economy has been shifting towards increased stability and predictability, which is in part due to the prospect of EU accession. However, vulnerabilities and obstacles to growth are still present and lasting reform efforts will be required to sustain the current positive trend.

Sustained macroeconomic stability is still a considerable way off, even though economic fundamentals are improving, making the economy more resilient to future shocks. The government efforts have begun to bear fruit and economic growth will exceed 5% in 2004 for the third consecutive year running. Since the AK party came into power in November 2002 it has followed a proactive, market friendly reform and stabilisation policy.

Limited Overall Impact

Turkish accession will not have a major impact on the European economy. Its economy is simply too small although in some fields Turkish membership will be felt.

First, Turkey will continue to be a formidable competitor in sectors, in which it is already strong. This is true for industries such as textiles, cement and glass as well as tourism. Turkey will become, along with Spain and Italy, one of the very popular EU tourist destinations. The undeveloped parts of the coastline are likely to draw a great deal of interest from property developers and Turkey's vast empty spaces should attract investment from industry sectors that are running out of land for industrial development in the EU-25.

As Turkey moves towards accession, it will attract substantially higher amounts of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) than at present. FDI has been very low and over the last ten years the average annual flow has amounted

to barely 750 million Euro (0.4% of GDP). The low level of FDI has been caused by a number of factors including political and macro-economic instability, corruption, 'red tape' and a low sovereign credit rating (currently at BB-/B1 which is three or four notches below investment grade).

Turkey has made some changes recently, including new laws to end discrimination between domestic and foreign investors and to reduce bureaucratic barriers for issues such as company registration. The government has also created a FDI Agency and has committed itself to speeding up the privatisation process.

Opportunities for investment exist in numerous sectors including automobiles, energy, building, environment, food and drink, healthcare, power, etc. FDI should increase substantially because of domestic market potential of 70 million consumers, for the bridge function that it could play towards the Middle East and Central Asia and, of course, for its lower labour costs than in the EU-28.

It has been estimated, that with the stability the EU accession process is expected to bring, Turkey should be able to attract an average of 4 billion Euro per year in the run up to actually accession and post-accession this could increase to 10 billion Euro plus per year.

Within 25 years, Turkey is expected to reach a population of 85 million and per capita income of 8.000 Euro. As a large, dynamic, 'purchasing-power-on-the-rise' with young consumers, Turkey will become a very important market for the EU. Turkey has signed a Customs Union with the EU in 1995. In the post-customs-union period (1995-2002) Turkey's trade with the EU has increased by more than 100%. Turkey's exports to EU jumped by 138% while imports went up by 80%. According to 2002 figures, Turkey ranks 11th in the list of the Union's largest trade partners, with a 2.2% share in EU exports and 2.4% share in EU imports. The EU, however, is Turkey's number one trading partner with 51% of the exports and 42% of imports to and from the Union.

Opening EU membership talks will at once help anchor the economy and aid in overcoming economic uncertainty.

On employment, Turkey suffers from three structural handicaps:

- The active working population is too small (47%). This low figure is particularly due to the very low number of women in the workforce. This leaves Turkey far behind the EU goal of 70% of active workforce by 2010 (as set out in the Lisbon objectives).
- Turkey's black economy is estimated to be somewhere between 20 and 50% of the registered economy. Far higher than any of the new

Member States, the black economy started to mushroom with greater urbanisation. Many people have left their rural homes to live in “shanty town” type dwellings on the edges of the big cities and have survived by means of a “suitcase” business. Among other things this situation creates an unfair playing field where companies find themselves competing against others that are not paying taxes and that do not comply with official regulations. Therefore it is vital for the Turkish economy that the government addresses this problem urgently.

- Lack of education is also to blame for Turkey’s high unemployment. Those with less than a high school education make up 65% of the total unemployed (circa 2.49 million).

Income and employment disparities continue to be huge. In particular in the South-East which represents 20% of the population and where there is an unemployment rate of 21.6% and per capita income is 70% less than the Turkish average. The difficult political situation in these areas has severely restricted economic progress and for political reasons, Turkey neglected to examine the possibility of land reform in the South-East, which has widened the gap between the rich and poor throughout, allowing the income disparities to grow. To compensate for this problem, the Turkish government should encourage the development of industry, away from agriculture, which will in turn create, over time, a more attractive Turkey for the European Union, as Turkey will be less dependent on financial support to its agricultural sector from the CAP. Tackling regional disparities will therefore be a major challenge, which the should EU support.

Turkey’s tax structure requires an overhaul. Better tax collection mechanisms are needed along with a more balanced composition of tax revenues, as the government presently relies too much on indirect taxes (VAT, tariffs, etc).

Privatisation needs to be completed as it has been rather disappointing so far and the government continues to control key strategic enterprises. For example the government still controls around 30-40% of the banking sector (in terms of assets) and it also still owns companies in the airline, oil and telecom industries.

Impact on the EU Budget

Turkey’s membership will certainly have an impact on the EU budget but it is not easy to estimate because EU policies will change substantially in the next decade. Structural/regional policy and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) are expected to change considerably in the next ten years. Turkey will also change.

Turkey has a large agricultural sector, employing one-third of its workforce. Livestock, dairy and cereals may face strong competition from EU farmers, but Turkey will be competitive with products such as peaches, citrus fruits, figs, nuts, etc. Much of Turkish agriculture is subsistence or semi-subsistence farming in small-holdings.

Whatever the future weight of agriculture in the EU budget, Turkey is likely to receive a large share of whatever assistance will be granted 10-15 years in the future.

Conclusion

Although Turkey is large in terms of its population, it is small in economic terms and therefore, overall, it will have a relatively limited impact on the EU economy. An EU that has already successfully taken on board more than 12 new countries should be able to rise to the challenge of integrating Turkey particularly if it remains firmly committed to reform and growth paths.

3. Foreign & Security Implications of Membership

Turkey is an important regional power with interests in the Mediterranean, Middle East, Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans. All these areas are characterized by instability and pose potential security problems for the EU. Although there may be some differences, overall the EU and Turkey have similar interests in seeking to promote peace, prosperity and stability in these regions. Although Turkey has, overall, good relations with its neighbours a number of outstanding problems still exist including Greece (territorial disputes in the Aegean, Cyprus), Syria (border, water) and Armenia (history & the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in Azerbaijan). It has the largest armed forces in Europe (790 000) and spends proportionately more on defence (4.8% of GDP) than any other European member of NATO. It thus has an important capacity to support European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) operations, something that it is already doing as a candidate country.

Turkey is regarded as a key ally of the United States, but in the run up to the US-led invasion of Iraq revealed that Turkey was willing to go against the wishes of Washington when its own interests were at stake. It has generally been supportive of the EU developing its own defence capability and structures while underlining the continuing importance of the Atlantic Alliance.

The future of Turkish foreign policy will be influenced by a number of factors, both external and internal. The external factors include terrorism, developments in the Middle East and the future of US and EU foreign

policy. The internal factors include political stability, the willingness of the armed forces to remain under civilian control and resolution of the ongoing difficulties with the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) also known as KADEK and KONGRA-GEL.

Turkey's Neighbourhood

Turkey is situated in a volatile region. Accession will mean that the EU's new neighbours will include Iraq, Iran and Syria plus the countries of the Southern Caucasus - Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Turkey's first priority is territorial integrity hence the importance it places on the Kurdish issue. There are some 13 million Kurds in Turkey. Turkey will be vigilant regarding future developments in Iraq given the large degree of autonomy enjoyed by the Kurds in northern Iraq. There are also significant Kurdish minorities in Iran and Syria (circa six and one million respectively). Turkey should have a shared interest with the EU in helping to rebuild Iraq and ensuring that it develops some political and economic stability.

Like the EU, Turkey is suspicious of Iran's nuclear ambitions and the political control of the clerics. Historically, Ankara had always feared the possible exporting of the "Islamic revolution" with Iran supporting Islamist groups in Turkey. However, over the last decade these fears have diminished. Iran's support of the PKK, who once had training camps on Iranian territory, has also ebbed away.

Recently Turkey and Iran have up-graded their relationship with regular dialogues on political and security issues. Economically too, things have improved with bilateral trade reaching over \$2 billion. In the energy sector Turkey and Iran cooperated on the Tabriz-Erzurum gas pipeline. This should be of interest to the EU as the Turkish gas network is soon to be expanded and then linked with that of Greece.

Economic and social relations between Turkey and Syria have drastically improved following the Syrian decision to withdraw its support for the PKK and to deport its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, from Syria in 1998. Fears over the possible establishment of an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq has also led to an improvement in relations with the two states agreeing to cooperate in the fight against the PKK. A historical Free Trade Agreement will also be signed at this end of the year. However, two issues of contention still remain. The first concerns the Turkish province of Hatay, formerly the Syrian *sanjak* of Alexandretta, which France, then the mandatory power in Syria, ceded to Turkey on the eve of the Second World War. The Syrians have not forgotten this act, but few Syrians hope the territory will ever be recovered. The second question has been a burning issue for years. Syria's contention that Turkey's large-scale programme of dam-building and irrigation in south-east Anatolia is

starving it of a fair share of Euphrates water, vital to the life of Syria's own Jazira province.

In Iraq, Turkey's primary interest is to prevent the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in the north and to avoid a resumption of violence with the PKK whose headquarters are in Northern Iraq and who are still carrying out small but regular attacks on Turkish forces. Turkey maintains lukewarm relations with the two Iraqi Kurdish leaders: Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) faction leader Jalal Talebani and Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) leader Massoud Barzani. Turkey warned right from the beginning against the possible repercussions of a military strike in Iraq and continues to insist on the country's territorial integrity, a strong central government in Baghdad, central administration of its oil resources and adequate consideration of the interests of the Turkmen minority.

There has been much speculation about Turkey's role as a model for other Muslim countries in the Middle East and Turkey's potential contribution to a resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute as Turkey is one of the few countries that has good relations with both the Israelis and the Palestinian Authority. Turkey does not perceive itself as a role model and has shown no inclination to export its values, including secular democracy, to other countries. Nevertheless most Member States attach considerable importance to the positive impact that the opening of accession negotiations would have on the wider Muslim world. Similarly Turkey, has been reluctant to be drawn into the Middle East Peace Process. If there were a settlement at some future date and the EU was invited to play a role either in economic assistance and/or peacekeeping, then Turkey would most likely be willing to play a full role.

Turning to the Southern Caucasus, Turkey has very good relations with both Azerbaijan and Georgia. Numerous agreements have been signed with these countries and Turkey also has two diaspora communities from the region. Moreover, Turkey has a key role to play in the development of Caspian energy being deeply involved in both the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline which is currently under construction and the planned gas line, which will run parallel to it to Erzerum.

Turkey's relations with Armenia are still troubled by past events. Turkey's loyalty to Azerbaijan led it to close its border and cut off all trade links with the Armenia in 1992 over the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh (a region within Azerbaijan which is under ethnic Armenian control). This was regrettable because Turkey was one of the first countries to recognize Armenia when it first obtained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and provided the country with much assistance and humanitarian aid. Furthermore Turkey has been angered by Armenia's refusal to recognise Turkey's Eastern borders and the continuing allegations of the Armenian government and the Armenian diaspora over the alleged genocide of 1915 for which they are seeking international recognition. However, meetings

between the two governments and most recently a meeting between the two Foreign Ministers on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Istanbul have shown that relations are slowly warming up and there is new political will on the Turkish side to resolve these issues.

Turkey has close cultural and linguistic ties with the states of Central Asia and therefore attaches high priority to its relations with them. Turkey was the first country to recognize the independence of the newly autonomous Central Asian States. These close geographic and cultural ties have so far provided an advantage to Turkey's economic initiatives in the region and more than one thousand Turkish companies operate in the region. Turkey also provides military assistance and training in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan.

During the past decade, Turkey has played a constructive role in the Balkans participating in combat and peacekeeping missions with the EU and NATO and in promoting investment in the region. The significant Muslim communities in the Balkans (Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bosnia Herzegovina) would welcome a decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey. There may be a friendly race between Turkey and the other Balkan countries to see who joins the EU first.

Turkish-Russian relations have traditionally been cool, each side fearing the ambitions of the other, as well as Iran, in the Caucasus and Central Asia. A strong increase in trade however has helped to improve relations between Moscow and Ankara. Both are members of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Although it has few achievements to its name, BSEC could receive a boost from Turkish membership of the EU (along with Romania and Bulgaria). Turkey is already cooperating with Russia in the energy sector with the completion of the "Blue Stream" natural gas pipeline which travels from Russia to Turkey under the Black Sea. Moreover, talks are underway to build a new oil pipeline from Russia to Kiyiköy on Turkey's Black Sea coast and then on to Ibrikbaba on the Aegean, known as the Trans-Thracian pipeline, which would allow Russian oil to reach the Mediterranean without having to pass through the congested Bosphorus Straits.

Ukraine would likely increase its efforts to become a candidate country following a decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey. This will present a further major challenge to the Union.

CFSP/ESDP

The regular political consultations between the EU and Turkey over the past decade have revealed few differences. Turkey has played a prominent role working alongside EU forces in peacekeeping operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan. Ankara has ratified all major international

agreements on arms control, proliferation and the UN conventions on terrorism. Its export control policy is regarded as satisfactory.

During the Convention on the Future of Europe Turkey was broadly supportive of proposals to strengthen CFSP/ESDP. It nevertheless favoured a reference to the NATO obligations of certain Member States in the final text.

Turkey has a good record of aligning itself with EU declarations, common positions and joint actions, although there have been some differences over human rights and Middle East issues.

Conclusion

Turkish accession could provide a significant boost to economic and trade links between the EU and Turkey's neighbours. Transport links should be improved in the Balkans as well as to the Caucasus and Central Asia thereby facilitating trade and increasing Turkey's importance as a hub. Many of Turkey's neighbours have significant energy reserves and Turkish accession could help secure access to these resources, possibly aided by the construction of new pipelines. Turkey could also play an important role in the EU's fight against terrorism and illegal immigration.

Turkey's membership in the EU should not therefore pose any major new problems for the EU's external relations but the Union will inevitably be drawn closer to several regions of continuing political and economic instability. Turkish membership could however be an asset for the EU in seeking to promote its interest in these regions. Whether the EU emerges as a global actor will depend more on the political will of all Member States and the readiness to make maximum use of the new treaty provisions rather than the addition of any one new state, even one as large and important as Turkey.

4. The Impact of Turkish Membership on the EU

The entry of Turkey into the EU will have a strong impact on its future functioning. That is why the European Council rightly invited the Commission to undertake a preliminary assessment of the impact Turkish membership on the Union as a whole.

It is also important that civil society forms an opinion. Civil society in Europe is concerned about Turkey's membership; it is afraid that the country might be too big and too poor to be digested without huge financial transfers from present Member States. There is also the fear that because of sheer size Turkey will exercise an excessive influence on decision-making within the EU. Finally, there remains a general wariness about a country that does not share the EU Member States' tradition of

Greco-Christian values, and might therefore find it difficult to integrate into the European mainstream.

The following comments are meant to help clarify the arguments in the debate and assuage outstanding concerns.

The Time-Frame

Turkish membership is not imminent, even given the hypothesis of a positive decision by the European Council in December on opening negotiations for accession. There is large agreement in Turkey and the EU that Turkish membership will not be feasible before 2014, when a new set of financial perspectives for the EU will come into operation. When looking at the possible impact of Turkish membership one therefore has to anticipate what the EU might look like ten or more years from now.

That is what makes the exercise so difficult. It requires making a few daring assumptions about the EU in 2015:

- The Constitution will be in operation.
- The Internal Market will be completed.
- The transition periods for the ten Member States that joined in May 2004 will have expired, but not so for the three Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia and Rumania) expected to join before 2010.
- The EU will have made considerable progress towards a Common Foreign and Security Policy
- The EU budget ceiling will not have been increased beyond 1.24% of GDP.
- The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will have been essentially completed, with expenditures focused on direct payments to farmers and no longer on market support.
- Expenditures for cohesion/regional policy for the majority of present Member States will have been phased out.

Institutional Aspects

By 2015 Turkey will have population of about 82 million, equal to that of Germany. It will therefore dispose of the same number of elected representatives in the European Parliament (EP) and have the same voting power, i.e. 14%, in the Council as Germany. Jointly with three other Member States Turkey could rally 35% of the EU population necessary to block decisions in the Council. It would be naïve not to envisage such a scenario, all the more so as Turkey's weight is bound to rise compared to all other Member States because of continued demographic growth. By 2050 Turkish population should have stabilised at around 95 million, while the population of all other Member States is expected to steadily drop.

In order to cope with this prospect the EU might *in extremis* decide to introduce a population “cap,” as the Constitution has already done for EP membership (with a ceiling of 95 MEPs). This issue will need to be addressed in the course of negotiations. It will, in any event, be indispensable to modify the Constitutional Treaty and adapt it to Turkish membership. Enhanced cooperation alone may be insufficient to deal with the challenges posed by further accessions.

This being said, the demographic size of the country is only one factor that determines the role a country plays in the policy shaping and decision making of the EU. Other factors (European commitment, diplomatic standing, scientific and economic importance, alliances with other Member States) are at least as important as the population figures, especially in the phases preceding the formal decisions. By 2015 Turkey’s GDP will, under optimistic assumption, have grown to be no more than 4% of the total EU Gross Domestic Product! Also, it seems unlikely that even by 2050 the Turkish GDP will be proportional to its population. In conclusion, the demographic issue might turn out to be a storm in a teacup.

Migration

The fear of huge migratory flows from Turkey to the rest of the EU is widespread in European civil society. Turkey will continue to be the poorest country in the EU, with an expanding population for many years to come. If past experiences are anything to go by, Turkish migration would likely taper off after a first boom following the opening of negotiations, as has been the experience with open migration from Poland to Western Europe during the transition period.

By 2015, this perspective might appear much less threatening than today. The EU will certainly negotiate a transition period, as it has done for the last wave of enlargement. The transition period might be longer than that for the EU-10, perhaps seven years or even more than that. Thus, unregulated Turkish immigration would not be possible until 2020 at the earliest. By that time, the demographic situation in Europe might have deteriorated to a point in which the infusion of migrants from Turkey – rather than from Asian or North African countries – may appear to be more of a blessing than a curse.

Figures of 15-18 million Turks who are said to be ready to emigrate seem vastly exaggerated and they ignore the reality that Turkey will be a very different country 20-25 years from now. Increasingly, as the most recent enlargement has proven, EU and overseas capital is being invested in lower income countries in an effort to benefit from the often highly trained workforce in these countries. This is an obvious reversal of trends in which those from low-income countries used to migrate to high-income countries. We should expect this pattern to remain valid in the future EU.

Regional Policy

Assuming present rules remain unchanged, Turkey will become the biggest single beneficiary of funding from the regional development fund. That would be perfectly normal and welcome in order to reduce the prosperity gap. It will compete with the Central European Member States for such funding. We shall most likely witness a repetition of the ongoing fierce battle over the distribution among present Member States for their shares during the 2007-13 period. It is by no means clear, however, what side the cake will be in 2015. Much will depend on growth rates within the EU, and Turkey, over the next decade.

Agricultural Policy

Similar considerations apply to the CAP. The per hectare premiums within the EU-28 for the financial perspectives 2014-20 will already have to be reduced. The high premiums presently granted to the EU Member States are not sustainable, unless the EU substantially increases the share of agriculture in the total budget expenditures, which appears highly unlikely. The prospect of Turkey's membership will make this dilemma even more evident. The EU will have to address this sensitive issue in the course of the negotiations and ensure that the legal instruments are modified ahead of Turkish membership.

Turkish Nationalism

One of the apprehensions frequently expressed about Turkey's membership concerns "Turkish nationalism." People see Turkey as another "Trojan Horse" comparable to that of Great Britain and fear that Turkey might to block EU decision-making in areas where its interests diverge from those of other Member States. For the many areas where Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) will be the rule under the new Constitution this objection does not hold. Turkey will simply be outvoted. In some areas where unanimity will remain the rule, enhanced cooperation among groups of Member States may be the way forward.

The real crux will be in unanimity areas where enhanced cooperation does not constitute a viable solution, e.g. constitutional amendments, budgetary ceilings and financial perspectives. But why should Turkey isolate itself in areas where it shares interests with other Member States.

Like other new Member States Turkey will learn the rules of the game and understand that as a member of the "club" it cannot constantly be the 'odd man out.' Thus it would appear that the fears about "Turkish nationalism" becoming a blocking factor in the future EU are exaggerated.

Conclusion

Turkish EU membership will not endanger the normal functioning and evolution of the Union provided that there is a further strengthening of the institutions. Like any other Member State Turkey will defend its national interests and it will have more nominal influence on the legislative process than any other Member State, barring Germany, it will still not be able to dominate EU decision-making.

5. Overall Assessment

The progress that Turkey has made over the past three years in meeting the Copenhagen Criteria, has demonstrated the commitment and determination of the government towards EU membership, even though it realises the road will be long and bumpy. Both sides are talking of 2015 as the earliest target date. It will take some time before the reforms are fully reflected in the attitudes of executive and judicial bodies at all levels throughout Turkey and will require a great deal of determination from the government. Nevertheless, the EU should take a positive decision on opening negotiations for Turkish membership at the December meeting of the European Council. The consequences of a negative decision would be detrimental for both Turkey and the EU. The pace of the Turkish reform process could potentially even grind to a halt. This cannot be in the EU interest nor can the EU have any interest in creating a serious crisis of confidence whose shock waves would be felt far beyond Turkey's borders. This does not mean yes to accession. By 2015 Turkey hopefully will have crossed the societal threshold for democracy and Europeanisation. The Turks will have formed a much better opinion of what membership of the Union involves and will be able to reach an informed decision as whether accepting the full *acquis* is really what Turkey wants.

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