Trojan Horse on Europe's Doorstep

Turkish EU Membership and European Security

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Turkey's accession to the European Union (EU) is a matter of controversy. An aspect of this controversy has to do with the possible security implications of Turkish membership for the security of entire Europe. The main point at issue is whether Turkey's accession will result in the "import" of crisis and conflicts to the EU or, conversely, in the "export" of Europe's peace and stability zone to Turkey and beyond – the Middle East and Central Asia. The main argument proposed in this article is that a thorough analysis of the issue reveals a fairly controversial picture, which makes exclusive views and forecasts difficult to defend. Namely, Turkey's accession may certainly have positive effects on the EU security, but it may also give rise to a multitude of new, serious and dangerous security challenges. The theoretical framework of this study is set by the views of the Copenhagen School and, in particular, its Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT).[1] Still, the conclusions reached by this author with respect to Turkey differ from those arrived at by the prominent representatives of the above-mentioned school. While Buzan and Diez argue that both parties would be better off if Turkey remained outside the EU and thus continued to play the role of the insulator (Buzan and Diez, 1999), this study will show that so exclusive a position is difficult to justify. The argument will be presented in three steps. First, the main contours of Turkey's strategic importance for the EU will be outlined. This will be followed by an analysis of the positive implications Turkey's membership may have on European security. And, lastly, I will review the possible negative consequences of this outcome.

Turkey's strategic importance

The European security environment has undergone a dramatic change after the end of the Cold War. Hard security threats characteristic of the Cold War, such as for instance military invasion, made way for multilateral soft security threats including terrorism, arms proliferation, ethnic and civic tensions, collapsing of states, organized crime, demographic pressures and illegal migrations. In geographic terms, the strategic arena has shifted from Central and Eastern Europe towards South-East Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia (Drorian 2005). Quite obviously, Turkey is located at the centre of this new strategic area. The Regional Security Complex Theory places Turkey at the intersection of three regional security complexes: European, Middle Eastern and post-Soviet[2] (Buzan and Waever 2003). According to this theory, Turkey plays the role of an insulator between the three complexes. It thus, "carries the burden of its difficult position, but is not sufficiently strong to unite these world into a single one" (Buzan, 2003:41). Turkey's role is to practically separate the security dynamics of the different complexes (Buzan and Diez 1999:47). Actually, Turkey is involved in the security dynamics of all three complexes. In the Middle Eastern, Turkey maintains close military relations with Israel and, of late, also Egypt. It has also played an important role in the Middle East peace process (Muftuler Bac 2000:297). Furthermore, during the second Gulf War (1990-1991), as well as later on, in maintaining the no flight zone on the north of Iraq, Turkey was the key US ally, by making its air force base Incirlik available for these purposes. Finally, Turkey has cross-border disputes with Syria and Iraq related to hydrological projects to control upper Euphrates waters, and the position of the Kurdish minority in Iraq (CIA 2006).

In the European complex, Turkey has, for the most part desecuritized[3] its relations. A member of NATO since 1952 and associated member of the European Community (EC) from 1963 and West European Union (WEU) from 1992, Turkey became a candidate for full EU membership in 1999. The only exception in this respect is the securitized relationship Turkey has with Greece in the matter of Cyprus, the northern part of which has been practically under its occupation ever since 1974. Legally speaking, Turkey is in effect occupying a part of the EU, which it seeks to join. Last but not least, Turkey has a five-century historical legacy in the Balkans.[4] In view of its cultural links (e.g. Bosnia-Herzegovina), geopolitical calculations (e.g. Macedonia) and its two million diaspora, Turkey is certainly motivated to take an interests in the events on the Balkan peninsula.[5]

Turkey is also a very active participant in the Caucasian and Central Asian sub-complexes and has two important nexuses in those parts. The first is in Turkophone ethnic and linguistic minorities who live there and number over 150 million. Turkey, naturally, tries to influence them, in competition with Iran and Russia. The second is found in the region's abundant reserves of oil and gas. "These energy sources are so huge that whoever controls them will have the key trump in the strategic balance of the 21st century" (Muftuler Bac 2000:498). Here again, Turkey competes with Russia and Iran with "rivalling projects for pipelines to link the oil reserves of the Caspian basin with the world markets" (Buzan 2003:422). In view of Europe's energy dependence on oil and gas from the Middle East and the Caspian region, Turkey appears to be the unavoidable corridor. The significance of this position for Europe, large as it was in the 1900s, is bound to increase still further in the 21st century.

Mindful of the above-mentioned importance of Turkey for European security, the EU, in 1999, offered it a prospect of full membership.[6] Initially, at the 1997 Luxembourg summit, Turkey was denied the membership candidacy status. But, in the next two years, the EU substantially revised its security role, and one of the key reasons for that was the conflict in Kosovo and Metohija. In December 1998, the President of France Jacques Chirac and British Prime Minister Tony Blair met at Saint Malo and jointly launched the idea of European defense and security policy (ESDP). Other heads of European states and governments endorsed the idea next year, at European Council meetings in Cologne and Helsinki. As Europe's key ally in NATO, with the sixth largest standing army in the world (Muftuler Bac 2000:496), Turkey was immediately recognized as a "missing link", and the newly developed "skeleton" of European security architecture was thus provided with the necessary "muscle". It is therefore hardly surprising that Turkey was offered EU candidacy at the Helsinki summit in December 1999 when the ESDP concept was adopted on EU level, and supplemented with Helsinki Headline Goals (Eralp 2000:55). Finally, in October 2004 Turkey was given the "green light" to commence negotiations on its EU membership. The question is, though, what the security implications of Turkish membership in the EU will be.[7] Apparently, it could yield both benefits and new challenges to the preservation of peace and security in Europe. The next two segments of this article will deal with the two sides of this "coin", in turn.

Benefits

Positive implications may be classified in three groups: geostrategic, geopolitical and geocultural. In geostrategic terms Turkish incorporation in the emerging European security architecture may produce several benefits for the EU. In the first place, just as the protagonists of previous enlargements, Turkey will bring with it new tasks and missions into the ESPD CFSP[8] (Sjursen 1998). Once distant regions of Central Asia, the Caucasus and Middle East will become EU's neighbours. Second, the Turkish army is very strong and to all appearances more prepared to joint operations requiring human casualties, than is the case in

2

numerous other "postmodern" European armies, which are extremely sensitive to human loses. Therefore, Turkey may help Europe to overcome the capability-expectations gap between munitions and ambitions (Hill, 1993) and become a credible actor on the international scene. Third, the threats the EU is facing today are of the transitional soft security type, as described above. These threats link the security dynamics of the EU with those of the Middle Eastern and post-Soviet security complexes, no matter whether Turkey is there to play the buffer role. That is what Solana means saying that "it makes no strategic sense at all to view European security in isolation. In a world characterized by increasing interdependence, European security is linked with the security of Asia and Africa" (Solana 1996:3). Turkish participation in the CFSP and ESDP may certainly help Europe to provide a more efficient response to these new security challenges.

The geopolitical benefit for the EU may take the form of expansion of *Pax Europea* to Turkey, and perhaps even beyond. Turkish EU membership will doubtlessly provide the momentum for political and economic reforms in the country, which will, in turn, help guarantee the peace and security in the region. In that sense, EU enlargement may be viewed as a theory of democratic peace in action. (Doyle 1983). In addition, the zone of democratic peace and the European security complex will reach the borders of regions where some of the most intense conflicts on this planet are still raging. With the increasing influence of the EU the traditional make up of international relations in the Middle East, based on the balance and politics of power, could gradually be replaced with a multilateral conflict management mechanism, as well as liberalization and democratisation of Middle Eastern political systems (Leonard 2005), and ultimately the expansion of *Pax Europea* to the region. Finally, a thorough analysis must take into account the geocultural arguments that work in favour of Turkish membership (Drorian 2005). These arguments go hand in hand with the above-mentioned geopolitical arguments, but still rely on a different perspective. Turkey is the only majority Muslim state that has embraced secularism, democracy and market economy. It has, at the same time, become a member of western organization such as the Council of Europe, OSCE, OECD as well as eastern associations like the Islamic Conference Organization (ICO) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). In that sense Turkey may play the role of not only the key partner in searching for a trans-regional response to joint security threats, but also one of a bridge for a superior dialogue between West and East. It can thus serve Europe and the world as an "antidote" for the conflict of civilizations (Huntington 1993). However strong these arguments in favour of Turkish membership may be, the analysis cannot ignore a whole series of challenges it may create for European security. These will be analysed in the following, last, section of this article.

Challenges

In the first place, being the key American ally, Turkey may stop the process of ESDP autonomization from NATO. Furthermore, as a major champion of national sovereignty, it may also stop the extension of the communitarian supra-national decision-making process to the second EU pillar, comprising the CFSP and ESDP. Still, as certain international relations theoreticians of social-constructivist provenance rightly claim, the experience of previous EU enlargements suggests that these negative consequences could be mitigated by the interaction of two specific processes. The first process is Europeanization, i.e. the breakthrough of European norms and values into the national political space. The concept of Europeanization explains that "weak institutions may influence the preferences and interests of member states, even in sensitive political matters such as defense and security" (Gamble 2001; Ladrech 1994). The second process has to do with the construction of a joint European identity with positive influence on coherency, and the possibility for compromise within the CFSP and ESDP (Sedelmeier 2003). Just to what extent these two related dynamics will "work" in the case of Turkey is yet to be seen.

The central challenge is perceived in the import of Turkery's securitized relations in the Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia, into the ESDP sphere. This could, at best, paralyse the ESDP, since it would probably be impossible to reach a consensus on the related issues within the EU. However, it could also draw the ESDP into the balance of power games in these regions and thus undermine the above-mentioned possibility of *Pax Europea.* In the worst scenario, Turkey's entry into the EU would result in the highly-conflicting Middle Eastern merging with the desecuritized European complex and, consequently, import of conflicts into the EU. Particularly interesting in this respect would be to consider the possibility of a link between the security dynamics of the Middle East and the tensions in the Balkans (Buzan and Diez 1997). Although it is not likely that this kind of a scenario, fully confirming the metaphor of the Trojan horse, will be realized, it should not be ruled out altogether. Turkish accession to the EU could also set off an economically motivated societal security dynamics. Namely, a large number of individuals, especially in the wealthier parts of the EU, fear that Turkey's membership would trigger an avalanche of Turkish immigrants descending on the European West in search of better paid jobs. Regardless of whether such concerns are founded, a fear of Turkish emigrants does exist and could easily be securitized. The combined effects of Islamophobia, inferior social integration of the Turks in the EU and the high unemployment rate caused by the economic stagnation in the European zone could easily spark off the processes of economic and societal securitization, and the strengthening of the extreme right in Europe.

Finally, Turkish membership may give rise to politically provoked processes of societal securitization both for the EU and for Turkey. Ever since 1920 Turkey has pursued the path of Westernisation. However, the Kemalistic vision of the project is fairly archaic and comprises the ideologies of statism and nationalism. It is precisely these ideologies, exported to Turkey early on in the 20th century, that Europe today is trying so hard to overcome. It demands from Turkey to divest the army of its major role in safeguarding the secular order, but this may result precisely in the Islamization of the Turkish political life. Taking this into account, it is entirely understandable why all Islamist parties in Turkey today support its entry into the EU, while the largest euro-sceptics are found among the radical "Kemalists" and nationalists (Kosebalaban 2002). Viewed from this angle, "both the Kemalist and Islamist Turkey may represent an unacceptable threat to the political and social self-identification of Turkey and the EU" (Buzan 1999:46).

Conclusion

It is very difficult to assess, i.e. prognosticate, the scope and kind of influence Turkey's accession to the EU may have on European security. Geostrategic, geopolitical and geocultural arguments in favour of this membership are indisputable. But, counter-arguments are not entirely unfounded either. The consequences of Turkish membership may be highly controversial for the ESDP. Turkey's key role in stabilizing the surrounding conflicting regions may easily turn into a Trojan horse, serving to enable the spillover of these conflicts into the EU space. Finally, Turkish entry of the EU could also start numerous societal and political securitizations in Turkey as well as in the remaining part of the EU. An argument which unambiguously favours one or the other claim is difficult to find today, if we wanted to remain objective. Which of the scenarios explained above will actually come try, will depend on a multitude of factors, including most importantly the internal transformation of the EU on the one hand, and Turkey as both a state and society, on the other. If, and when, Turkey does enter the EU, neither will be the same as they are today. Still, one thing is certain: the longer the accession period takes, the less chances there will be for the EU to be caught unawares by the above-mentioned adverse consequences.

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[1] Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT). For more on this approach see: Buzan Barry and Waever Ole, Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security, CUP, Cambridge, 2003.

[2] Especially two post-Soviet security complexes – Caucasian and Central Asian.

[3] The concepts of securitization and desecuritization were developed by Danish author Waever Ole and are integral to the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. Securitization denotes a speech act naming an existential threat for a specific referent object (e.g. identity, state, etc.), thereby declaring an issue as one of security, which demands and legitimises the undertaking of certain extraordinary measures. Desecuritization is the reverse process. Both terms are clumsy even in the English language, but appropriate alternatives have not been offered so far. For more on securitization and desecuritization see, Waever o., 'Securitization and Desecuritization', in: Lipshutz Ronnie, ed., *On Security*, Columbia University Press, New York:1995

[4] During the conflicts of the 1990s, in addition to participating in resolving the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey also provided humanitarian assistance. Its troops served under the UN command, and the country also took in several thousand refugees from these parts (Muftuler Bac 2000:497).

[5] We should bear in mind that a small, but very important part of Turkey, including a section of Istanbul, is located precisely in the Balkans.

[6] Compared with previous Union enlargements, the case of Turkey is probably the only one where security motives were of primary importance. In the instances of enlargement northwards in 1973 (Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark) and 1995 (Austria, Finland and Sweden), the EU's motives, as well as those of accessing countries were primarily of economic nature. Southward enlargements in 1981 (Greece) and 1986 (Portugal and Spain) were primarily politically motivated (e.g. stabilization of democratic systems). In the so called big bang of 2004, the motives were mixed and included economic and political, but primarily security consideration, as well argumented by Higashino in his study (Higashino, 2004)

[7] If, and when it happens.

[8] CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy).