



E U R O P E A N D T U R K E Y



CHALLENGES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Turkey's EU accession perspective may be perceived as sputtering at a snail's pace due to a slowdown of reforms in Turkey and hostility from France and Cyprus. In an era of rising regional instability and global challenges, the decline in the momentum is a net loss for Turkey and Europe at precisely the moment when integration should be strengthened, not weakened. The end result is a strategic vacuum that harms common European interests on current and forthcoming challenges, whether political, economic or social.

Globalization is steaming ahead at an ever faster rate facilitating the transnational exchange of goods, services, capital, people, knowledge and social contacts around the world. It has also made easier the movement of disinformation, digital and biological viruses, nuclear technologies, organized crime, terrorism, economic shock waves and climate change. In the midst of international challenges and the ongoing economic crisis stands one of the prime examples of the virtues of global integration: Turkey's desire to embrace the liberal, social and democratic values of the European Union. No other example demonstrates so vividly the tantalizing convergence of western liberalism, Eurasian heritage and global trends as does the Turkish membership in the EU. Yet, this historic process of enlargement is suffering from relative inertia and tangible obstacles.

Europe's credibility

Politicians of different ideological persuasions such as former French President Jacques Chirac, President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero and Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt have recently underlined the increasing importance of Turkey's role in the world and in Europe: "A Turkey which will be fulfilling the criteria of membership will bring to the EU the critical size that it needs to face the global challenges of the twenty-first century".

In many ways, Turkey has seized upon the opportunities of membership to realize this vision. Turkey grew fast between

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2002 and 2007, entrenched its democracy, invested significantly to create a modern infrastructure, and developed active policies in the fields of energy, security, and new technologies. Nevertheless, in the last three years, its gumption for radical reforms has fallen progressively into stagnation in direct proportion to the proliferation of Turkey-skeptic rhetoric from France, Germany and Austria. In some cases this rhetoric has gone beyond the limits of skepticism, flirting with different tones of xenophobia and turcophobia, in obvious contradiction with the values that the European Union claims to cherish in the 21st century.

Complicating matters is the fact that public opinion in Turkey has become more sensitive to negative voices than to positive ones. An increasingly euro-sceptical mood suffused with nationalist sentiments has been the unfortunate corollary of this trend.

Aggravating the Turkish public's deepening antipathy to accession is the EU's inability to keep its promises on Cyprus that, in turn, severely damaged pro-European forces in Turkey. Turkey also had been suffering from its own mistakes. In the last two decades Ankara failed to seize the right moment to be proactive on Cyprus. When finally the EU asked Turkey to encourage a settlement to the Cyprus dispute by supporting the UN peace initiative, Turkey obliged. The referendums held in



2004 simultaneously in both the north and the south of the island exhibit Turkish Cypriots irrefutable accord for the UN initiative, for reunification and for Europe. However, in an abrupt and calculated change of mind, the Greek Cypriot leadership pushed for a no-vote that resulted in the accession of a divided Cyprus to the EU. The economic isolation of the Turkish Cypriots continued and eventually a partial suspension of membership negotiations between Turkey and the EU took place.

Transatlantic relationship and Turkey

Turkey's constructive role as an exporter of Western security policies towards the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Caucasus



and the Middle East has also been enhanced considerably in the last decade. In the consolidation of the French President Sarkozy's Union for the Mediterranean project, pacification of the Russo-Georgian conflict, the mediation of indirect talks between Israel and Syria and the Lebanese-Syrian confidence-building initiatives Turkey intervened as a regional and European power. Turkish President Abdullah Gül's historic visit to Armenia in September last year also opened a larger room for maneuver for Turkey's external relations in a region marked not only by military confrontation, but also considerable economic interests. Another success of Turkish diplomacy was to receive overwhelming support (151 votes out of 193) from member countries to get elected to the UN Security Council from the contingent allocated to the European continent. Turkey will almost be fully integrated into the EU's foreign policy sphere provided that an eventual political settlement between

resource-poor Armenia. Naturally, the delicate balancing act appears impossible as Turkey has to secure gas supplies for the putative Central Asia-to-Austria Nabucco pipeline intended to diversify EU energy supplies without the assurances of EU membership.

During his visit to Turkey in April, US President Barack Obama clearly recognized the strategic benefits of Turkey's quest for the EU and for the reinvigoration of the transatlantic relationship. It is now time for the US to elaborate a more analytical support for Turkey's integration with Europe not only as a target but also as a process. This implies going beyond the rhetoric on the "geo-strategic importance of Turkey" and investing more in the fields of integration such as trade, energy, technology, ecology...

The eventual institutional development of the US-EU relations will also bring a new dimension to Turkey's European integration process. There is already a significant degree of cooperation between the administrations and the business communities of both sides, with the bilateral summits and Transatlantic Business Dialogue (TBD). In turn, the Turkish business community represented by TUSIAD (Turkish Industry&Business Association) follows closely these developments as a member of the Confederation of European

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the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities is attained. Should the current peace negotiations in Cyprus, widely considered to be the last chance for a settlement, fail to produce results by the beginning of 2010, the EU-Turkey relations could be further derailed. Hopes for a Cypriot settlement would then become a distant mirage.

Notwithstanding recent diplomatic achievements, Turkey's foreign policy encountered some conspicuous challenges of late, notably the collapse of Israeli-Syrian "indirect" peace talks following Israel's military operations in Gaza and the near standstill in the movement towards resolution of the Azeri-Armenian conflict over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. Lack of any credible movement is undermining efforts for the normalization of relations between Turkey and landlocked Armenia and destabilizing an already volatile southern Caucasus. Ironically, the EU's half-hearted, if at times, apprehensive attitude to Turkish accession may have complicated tentative steps to bilateral reconciliation by placing Turkey in the tortuous position of balancing between gas and oil-rich Azerbaijan and

Business (BUSINESSEUROPE). These business-to-business links should come as no surprise as Turkey is part of the EU's customs union and is progressively adopting EU legislation that covers almost all segments of economic life. More than ever, Turkey's accession to the EU would strengthen the transatlantic relationship to counteract the economic and political risk factors in and around Europe.

Turkey needs to move faster

Irrespective of the difficulties on the EU side, it is incumbent on Ankara to focus more attentively on the implementation of a comprehensive program of structural reforms. A new impetus towards EU membership requires political will, talent and action in three essential areas:

1. State reform

In the last decades, the Turkish society and the world have changed fundamentally whereas the state apparatus and system have remained wedded to the past. Thus, the public sector needs to overhaul recruitment and training policies, push for



the cross-sharing of knowledge among the institutions and for cooperation with civil society. It must adopt a bureaucratic mindset based on a citizens-oriented service ethic and implement quickly a state reform focused on the coherent implementation of the EU legislation.

2. Membership strategy

The so-called “EU requirements”, such as cultural freedoms, judicial reform, clean air, food safety, transportation and social rights are first and foremost the fundamental characteristics of a modern country and of a welfare society. The Turkish political establishment ought to understand that these are the sources of national interest and global competitiveness. In defining Turkey’s negotiation strategy, the aim to adapt to the EU’s future and not to its present should also be emphasized clearly. There are many examples of legislation which create problems or which are nonfunctional within the EU. The EU Commission itself simplifies the legislation under the heading of ‘better regulation’. Moreover, the institutional dimension alone is not enough. A comprehensive reform of the educational system targeting the formation of a more creative, innovative and cosmopolitan human capital is vital. Turkey should also engage in a movement of reforms in other fundamental fields such as labor market, informal economy, information society, energy resources, regional development, women’s rights, agriculture.

3. Communication

The contribution of EU membership to Turkey’s relationships with other parts of the world and the social development dimension are the main features of a much-needed communication effort at the domestic level. It is also time for Turkey to finally mobilize its resources for a creative external communication strategy.

Will Europe be ready?

Turkey, Europe and the world will experience important changes in the forthcoming period. In this perspective, the EU itself has the challenge of enhancing its global economic competitiveness, institutional efficiency, political integrity and democratic credibility. Only

this kind of EU can continue to have its appeal for Turkey. Because only such an EU can maintain its position as an important economic and political player in the 21st century.

The logos of the fundamental policy initiatives on the home page of the EU’s official Europa web site are meaningful:

- Financial and Economic Crisis
- Year of Creativity and Innovation
- Debate on Europe,
- Energy for a Changing World
- Economic Growth and Employment

All of these are also the areas in which Turkey can and will provide important additional value to Europe. Turkey - having completed its homework for EU membership - would mean much more economic dynamism, creativity, security, ecological wealth, historical heritage and energy for Europe. There is a clear three-way win-win-win formula here: for Turkey, Europe and the World.

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