

**TURKEY IN THE ENLARGEMENT PROCESS: FROM LUXEMBOURG TO
HELSINKI***
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Turkey's application to the European Community in April 1987 for full membership and the response of the Community triggered a reassessment of Turkey's Europeanness both in Europe and Turkey and resulted in the rise of anti-European feelings in Turkey.¹ The changes in the post-Cold War climate and the decisions of the Luxembourg Summit of the Union reinforced this tendency. In this climate, the issue of Turkey's full membership became a contentious one in the present enlargement process of the Union. This paper argues, however, that this problematic situation was neither to the advantage of the European Union nor to Turkey. It examines the factors that pressurised the European Union and Turkey to overcome the problematic relationship between them. The paper concludes by examining the decisions of the Helsinki Summit of the Union and discussing the prospects of a new relationship between the EU and Turkey. It shows how the Helsinki Summit provided a turning point in Turkey's relationship with the EU in establishing a better working relationship.

LUXEMBOURG SUMMIT AND ITS AFTERMATH

There were four possibilities for Turkey's relationship with the European Union before the Luxembourg Summit. The first scenario, which had the upper hand in the beginning, was the exclusion of Turkey from the enlargement process. Union officials were of the opinion that Turkey should not be included in the present enlargement due to long-standing economic and political problems as well as its size and the necessity for large financial contributions from the Union. They viewed the customs union arrangement as the basic mechanism to improve the relationship between Turkey and the Union without linking it to the issue of full membership. This attitude towards Turkey was quite apparent not only in Greece and Germany but also within the Commission of the Union. The reflection of this attitude is clearly visible in the Commission report, *Agenda 2000*, in which the Commission focused on eleven applicant countries and left Turkey out of the enlargement process.

The second scenario was to give Turkey a special status without commitment to full membership. It was realised during the discussions after the publication of *Agenda 2000* that the exclusion of Turkey, the longest standing applicant of the Union, from the enlargement process would not only aggravate tensions between the Union and Turkey but also lead to an increasing anti-European feeling in Turkey. Some observers of the Turkish case argued that Turkey could be kept within the emerging European project, short of full membership. As the Luxembourg Summit in December 1997 approached, discussions on the nature of this special status got more intense. For the Turkish side, the traditional Turkish policies of Europeanisation and Westernisation made it extremely difficult to give up the idea of full membership. Thus, there was clear opposition to the idea of special status. The Turkish side also believed that granting the possibility of full membership to eleven applicant countries and

putting Turkey in a special category would be discriminatory and unjust. Some European Union members, such as France and Italy, which were more interested in seeing the incorporation of the Mediterranean countries in the Union, saw the inherent dangers of this scenario more clearly than the others. There was also mounting US pressure on the European Union member countries to include Turkey in the enlargement process. Because of all these pressures, it became more difficult to put Turkey in a special category without the prospect of full membership.

The third scenario, which gained the upper hand in the climate leading up to the Luxembourg Summit, was to grant special status to Turkey, but with a prospect of full membership. Turkey would be included in the enlargement process but not in the accession strategy. The questions of the 'when?' and 'how?' of Turkey's full membership would be left ambivalent, but Turkey would be given a longer lead time. This strategy was thought to provide the most feasible solution to the Turkish problem. On the one hand, it would give Turkey the message that she was included in the enlargement process. On the other hand, it would not commit the European Union too much, primarily its financial resources, since Turkey would not be included in the pre-accession strategy. Pressure would be put on Turkey to reform its political and economic structures.

The fourth scenario, which did not have much chance of success, was to treat Turkey on a par with all other applicants in terms of full membership. Turkish officials supported this view, but Greece and Germany in particular argued against it. Their arguments gained ground in the discussions because of the prevalent perception of problematic relations between the Union and Turkey and because of the other countries' absence of political will to support the Turkish case.

The decisions of the Luxembourg Summit gave Turkey a special status with a long lead time to full membership. Turkey was included in the enlargement process but not given a pre-accession strategy as the other eleven candidate countries had been. The Union formulated a special 'European Strategy' that would prepare Turkey for accession by bringing it closer to the European Union. This decision was a clear improvement on the Commission report, Agenda 2000. European Union officials were of the opinion that the Turkish case was approached rather fairly and she was included in the enlargement process. However, the Turkish government believed that there was unfair treatment of Turkey and reacted strongly to the European Union's decision. As one close observer of the Turkish case pointed out, "Turkey gauged the EU's views less from what it said than from what it did not."² The critical word for Turkey was 'candidate': eleven countries, including Cyprus, were characterised as candidates and Turkey was not. Turkish government officials also thought that the Copenhagen criteria, which were said to be the objective base of the Luxembourg Summit, were implemented rather subjectively. Turkey, which was ahead of some countries in terms of economic and political criteria as well as adaptation to the *acquis communautaire*, was discriminated against and some countries were put ahead of Turkey because of political considerations and the political support they garnered from among EU members. Primarily, the inclusion of Cyprus created a deep feeling of resentment. Cyprus was not merely a candidate, but it was included in the first rank of candidates. Ankara thought that this decision was a clear sign that the European Union was taking sides with Greece on the Cyprus issue and acting under her influence.

The decisions of the Luxembourg Summit reinforced among the Turkish governing élite the anti-European tendency that had started after the rejection of Turkey's full membership

application in 1987. In the aftermath of the Luxembourg Summit, not only did some of the opposition parties take a negative attitude but also, for the first time, the coalition government parties started to take a distant stance vis-à-vis the Union. The Turkish political and economic élite generally shared the government's attitude, therefore we witnessed the emergence of a new consensus which coalesced around a more distant attitude towards the EU. The reflection of this attitude was clearly seen in the government's decision to suspend political dialogue with the European Union and not to participate in the European Conference to which Turkey was invited together with the other applicant countries. It was thought that the Union was setting some preconditions both in the invitation to the European Conference and in the European strategy formulated for Turkey.³ The government decided to continue the relationship with the EU based on the existing legal arrangements, primarily on the association agreement, rather than on the decision of the Luxembourg Summit.

The deep resentment to the decisions of the Luxembourg Summit resulted in the distancing of the Turkish government from the European Union. Important government officials started to emphasise that the EU was not an obsession for Turkey and Turkey had other foreign policy alternatives. In this climate, it became more difficult to implement even the customs union arrangement between Turkey and the Union. Many of the regulations and laws necessary to implement the customs union relationship did not go through the Assembly of the Parliament but waited for attention in different committees. There were discussions to review the customs union arrangement. Some influential members of the government argued against the customs union arrangement by pointing out that this relationship was working to the disadvantage of Turkey and increasing Turkey's trade deficit with the Union.⁴ It was also emphasised frequently that Turkey had the disadvantage of implementing the customs union without getting financial assistance from the Union. The most frequently stated argument was that the customs union arrangement for Turkey was linked to the prospect of full membership. Since this prospect is problematic, the customs union relationship was in a vacuum and therefore it could be revised. There were even suggestions to turn the customs union arrangement into a free trade relationship.

The Cardiff, Vienna and Cologne Summits of the European Council were unable to overcome the stalemate in the relationship between Turkey and the Union. Turkish government officials continued to think that there was no major change in the discriminatory attitude of the Union, that Turkey was not characterised as a candidate as the other eleven countries were, but was put in a special European strategy with unspecified financial resources. Government officials, however, acknowledged that there were some relative improvements in comparison to the Luxembourg Summit. These included the provision of financial resources to implement the European strategy while avoiding mention of sensitive political issues such as Cyprus and human rights and refraining from using the phrase 'eligible for membership'. Further, there was mention that reporting on Turkey should be based not only on the conclusions of the Luxembourg Summit, but also on article 28 of the Association Agreement between Turkey and the Union, the article that envisaged Turkey's full membership to the Community if conditions were met. However, Turkish government officials found these improvements inadequate for a change in the relationship between Turkey and the Union.

European Union officials, believed that the Luxembourg Summit and the successive summits marked substantial advances in bringing Turkey closer to the Union and in her accession process. It was frequently stated that Turkey is definitely included in the enlargement process. It was also emphasised that Turkey would be judged by the same Copenhagen criteria as the other applicant states. The Commission, to overcome the stalemate in the relationship with

Turkey, formulated wide-ranging proposals to implement the European Strategy for Turkey, outlining areas of co-operation that would make the customs union more effective.⁵ These included:

- Proposals for the intensification of industrial co-operation and the stimulation of investment;
- The extension of the customs union into the agriculture and services sectors;
- Giving greater substance to the customs union through technical assistance and administrative co-operation;
- Establishing mechanisms for Turkey to become involved in certain common Community programmes and agencies;
- The implementation of financial co-operation.

The Commission primarily emphasised the need to adopt the financial framework and, notably, the implementation of the special action for Turkey (ECU 375 million) to carry out the European Strategy for Turkey. On 4 November 1998, the Commission announced its first regular report on Turkey and on other applicant countries, which aimed to show that all, including Turkey, were being judged on the same Copenhagen criteria.⁶ This attitude was a clear improvement on that of the Luxembourg Summit: Turkey was reported together with other applicant countries, rather than put in a special category. The Turkish government, however, did not change its distant attitude towards the Union. The primary criticisms of the Turkish government were on the issue of Turkish 'candidacy'. It was strongly pointed out that Turkey would give less attention to such reports as long as it was not granted candidate status in a summit meeting of the European Council. The proposals of the Commission were unable to create important changes in the relationship between Turkey and the Union. While the Commission worked towards an incremental change, the Turkish government continued to wait for a major change on the issue of candidacy from the European Council.

HELSINKI SUMMIT AND PROSPECTS FOR A NEW WORKING RELATIONSHIP

There were two possible options in the Turkey-European Union relationship after the Luxembourg Summit. The first option was the possibility of Turkey's exclusion from the emerging European project. The increasing marginalisation of Turkey in Europe in the aftermath of the Cold War as well as the increasing anti-European feeling in Turkey pointed to this trend of exclusion from the European Union. As the analysis of the preceding pages indicates, Turkey's relationship with the EU has become increasingly conflictual since the middle of 1970s, tensions that started in the 1970s on economic issues continued in the 1980s on political matters and accelerated after the Cold War. Based on that trend, Turkey's marginalisation and exclusion in the Union were highly possible.

It should be pointed out that this development is to the advantage of neither the European Union nor Turkey. In the present international climate, it becomes evident that there was a trans-regionalisation of security issues and increasing erosion of traditional distinctions between European, Middle Eastern and Eurasian regions on security matters. While there is a growing inter-relationship between events in Europe, the Middle East and Eurasia, the stability of Europe is linked to the situation in the Middle Eastern and Eurasian regions. In this context, it would be difficult for Europe to maintain a stable economic and political

system if instability reigns in her adjacent areas. Turkey's role is quite crucial in the promotion of stability, primarily because Turkey is one of the few countries in her region with long-term ties to the West and with a relatively stable system in comparison to the other countries in her region. If Turkey is excluded from the European system of security, not only may this lead to an unstable situation in Turkey but also in her region as well; instability in Turkey may affect the region because of Turkey's pivotal regional role.⁷ Such instability has the potential to affect Europe as well because of the increasing erosion of borders between Europe, the Middle East and the Eurasian regions. In addition to the promotion of stability, Turkey has some crucial roles to play in the linkage of the trade, transport and energy routes of the Middle East, Persian Gulf and Transcaucasia to Europe.

Although the changing international climate has increased Turkey's strategic importance, the relationship of Turkey with one of the central actors of the international system, i.e. Europe and primarily the European Union, has become more problematic. While Turkey's place in the present enlargement process of the European Union is rather secondary, Turkey has a 'pivotal' position in the Eurasian region. Problematic relations with the European Union have limited Turkey's role in enhancing regional stability and her efforts for the process of integrating the region in the international system. In the context of the trans-regionalisation of security issues and the erosion of boundaries between the European Union and Eurasian regions, Turkey and the European Union needed to find ways to overcome the stalemate in their relationship.

There is a concern among some European policymakers that Turkey is more of a 'consumer' than a 'producer' of security, as in the Cold War years. Also, that there are increasing security problems both within Turkey and in the surrounding region. Therefore, the inclusion of Turkey within the European Union would expose the Union to unnecessary 'security risks'. These views are based on the assumption of a possibility of a clear boundary between Europe and Turkey. It is extremely difficult, however, to create boundaries between Europe and the Eurasian region within the context of the trans-regionalisation of security issues. Since Turkey is one of the states at the centre of the trans-regionalisation of security issues, the exclusion of Turkey will not minimise the security risks of Europe, but will affect the European security system quite adversely. The recent Öcalan affair clearly showed the impossibility of creating boundaries between Europe and Turkey. Turkey's security problems have penetrated Europe and become internal problems of Europe within the context of the trans-regionalisation of security issues.

European security problems, such as the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, have also become Turkey's problems. Therefore, there is a mutual interest in overcoming the problematic relationship between Turkey and the Union. The Union has concentrated its attention on the incorporation of Central and Eastern Europe, but the developments in the Balkans are also critical for Europe, as the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo have demonstrated. As the European Union starts to realise the significance of the promotion of stability in her surrounding regions, the solution of the problematic relationship with Turkey will be more evident.

The solution of the problematic relationship with the European Union is also important for Turkey and the integrative process of the region around Turkey. It is important not only economically but also as a wider 'civilisational' project. Turkey has followed a policy of Westernisation since the establishment of the Republic. In the aftermath of the Cold War, it is evident that Turkey's foreign policy options are increasing in her region and some analysts

argue that Turkey does not have to rely on Europe anymore. However, it should be pointed out that the European link would not adversely affect Turkey's regional orientation. Rather, Turkey would be stronger in her region if she was well connected to Europe, which increasingly means the European Union.

This analysis shows that there are mutual interests for Turkey and the European Union in formulating a working relationship that would overcome the problems between them. The formulation of a working relationship between the European Union and Turkey should go beyond the customs union arrangement and incorporate political and security considerations.⁸ It will be difficult to sustain a customs union relationship for a long time without linking it to arrangements that go beyond it. The Turkish governing élite are geared to a close linkage between the customs union relationship and full membership. As the recent debate in Turkey on the customs union shows, there is even a possibility for withdrawing from the customs union if it is not improved in time. The process of European integration and the Association Agreement with Turkey both envisage a step by step process of economic integration leading to political integration. Furthermore, the Turkish governing élite, as I have pointed out, are unhappy with the customs union arrangement as an end in itself and would like to take a more active role in the emerging security architecture of Europe. The increasing trans-regionalisation of security issues in Europe also creates an environment conducive to Turkey's inclusion in the European security system. As NATO emerges as the central institution in security matters in Europe, and as the European security architecture develops in linkage with NATO, Turkey's role in the security field cannot be overlooked.⁹ Turkey, being a full member of NATO and an active country in the European security system for the last fifty years, could play a greater role in the linkage between NATO and the emerging European security system. In addition to NATO, however, Turkey's links with the emerging European security institutions need to be strengthened. Turkey is only an associate member of the Western European Union and has an economic customs union relationship with the European Union. In addition to monetary integration in Europe, we are also witnessing the creation of a security architecture for Europe and the European Union, which has been marginal on security matters, is in the process of establishing its security dimension. Recent developments show that the European Union will acquire a more important role in security matters and some functions of the Western European Union may be transferred to the European Union in this process. It is also evident that the European Union will work closely with NATO in developing its security architecture. The recent Washington Summit of NATO and the new 'strategic concept' clearly reflect the increasing significance of 'out of area' concerns in a broader perspective on European security matters.¹⁰ The events in Bosnia and Kosovo have clearly shown the significance of what once were considered to be 'out of area' matters for European security. Turkey has played a crucial role in both conflicts. As the European Union is increasingly involved in the broader security issues of Europe together with NATO, it will be more difficult to overlook Turkey's role in the security field. This will increasingly necessitate the creation of a working relationship between Turkey and the Union's emerging Security and Defence Identity. As a first step, Turkey's already developed functions in the Western European Union may be transferred to the European Union. It is essential, however, that Turkey takes part not only in the phase of implementation of security policies, but also in the formulation of such policies. Turkey should be active in the emerging European security system, but the European Union needs to support these Turkish efforts if a working relationship is to be established. To establish this working relationship, the Turkish élite has indicated that it is essential that the European Union make Turkey a candidate like the other applicant countries and formulate a coherent strategy in response to the 'when?' and 'how?' questions of full membership and link this strategy to specific financial resources.

The recent Helsinki Summit of the European Union took into consideration these Turkish concerns and Turkey was offered a candidate status within the present enlargement process. The Helsinki Summit was a turning point in Turkey's relationship with the Union; it established a better working relationship. As I have argued in this paper, difficulties on both sides in establishing a working relationship in the last decade produced an impasse in Turkey's relationship with the EU. This situation, however, was neither to the advantage of the Union nor to Turkey. While the focus of the EU on the incorporation of Central and Eastern European countries in the present enlargement process made the Turkish application somewhat secondary, wider geopolitical considerations gave a 'pivotal' role to Turkey. This 'anomaly' in the Turkish case needed to be solved through the creation of a more co-operative relationship between the European Union and Turkey.

The Helsinki Summit overcame the long-lasting ambiguity over the Turkish case, ending the debate over whether Turkey is a European country. Turkey was clearly situated in the present enlargement process along with another twelve candidate countries with the addition of Malta. Turkey also became part of a similar accession partnership to those of the other candidate countries. This is a clear reflection of the willingness of the European Union to provide financial and technical support to prepare Turkey for membership, as it has done with the other candidate countries. On this issue, there was a major difference between Luxembourg and Helsinki. While in Luxembourg Turkey was treated separately from other candidate countries and put in an ambiguous European strategy, it was offered an accession partnership in Helsinki. The Union also manifested a clear attitude to treat Turkey according to the same Copenhagen criteria as the other candidate countries. These resolutions regarding Turkey were drastically different from Luxembourg: they were more open, inclusive and less discriminatory. As a result, the Turkish élite viewed the Helsinki resolutions quite positively as correcting the mistakes of Luxembourg.

The change in the relationship between the European Union and Turkey as manifested in the Helsinki Summit mainly emanated from the EU rather than from Turkey. In the aftermath of the Luxembourg Summit, there were increasing criticisms of the Luxembourg framework on enlargement within the EU – that it has provided a narrow and a discriminatory vision on enlargement and resulted in the creation of borders based on geographical and religious-cultural values. The change of the German government from Christian-Democrat to a Social Democrat-Green coalition reflected a new attitude on the enlargement process and on Turkey, with a more open and an inclusive attitude on enlargement.

The EU governments and the Commission of the EU also manifested a greater awareness of the strategic dimension of enlargement. The European Union has focused for a long time on economic and political issues rather than geopolitical considerations. This attitude started to change after the Kosovo crisis. EU officials began to realise that instability in the Balkans would have detrimental ramifications on the European integration process. If instability reigns in adjacent regions, it would be extremely difficult to create a Europe based on the idea of peaceful change. As a result, the European Union began to address broader geopolitical questions, starting with the issue of the creation of new patterns of co-operation in the Balkans. With the adoption of a new Stability Pact in the Balkans, the EU focused more on the problems of the region. Such an approach in the Balkans necessitated a new relationship between Greece and Turkey. It became quite evident that the creation of a co-operative relationship in the Balkans would be quite difficult if conflicts persist between Greece and Turkey. The tragic earthquakes in both countries created a new climate of co-operation and

we witnessed an increasing rapprochement between Turkey and Greece, as manifested by frequent visits of high officials after many years.

It is no coincidence that Turkish candidacy was offered in a summit in which important decisions were taken in consolidating European security and defence. The Helsinki Summit decided to create military forces of up to 50,000-60,000 persons to launch and conduct EU-led operations in response to international crises. This attitude shows the determination of the EU to develop an autonomous capacity in the field of security and in co-ordination with NATO. As I have argued in this paper, it would be increasingly difficult to overlook Turkey's role in the security field as the EU develops its common policy on security and defence. The development of this common policy on security and defence also necessitates a more co-operative relationship between Greece and Turkey. It would be quite difficult for the European Union to develop a common policy on security and defence if conflictual relations persisted between Greece and Turkey, particularly concerning the Balkans. In brief, this recent attitude of the European Union in consolidating a common policy on security and defence indicates the growing significance of geopolitical considerations on the agenda of the EU. It is quite evident that as the attention of the EU turns towards larger geopolitical concerns, the case of Turkey draws more attention and there is an inclusive attitude towards Turkey. Turkey's relationship with the European Union was at a historical crossroad. Turkey could have been marginalised or even excluded from the emerging European project or there could be a working relationship to incorporate Turkey within the European Union. The Helsinki Summit decided on the latter and this decision is to the advantage of both the European Union and Turkey.

The Helsinki Summit provided a turning point in Turkey's relationship with the European Union by clarifying Turkey's place within the present enlargement process. This change also necessitates a new attitude on the Turkish side towards the European Union. The Turkish élite have long been geared to the perception of relations with the Community and then Union on a bilateral basis, primarily because Turkey has had a relationship with the Community and then the Union since the Ankara Agreement in 1963. This long-lasting relationship has also been rather problematic in the last twenty-five years. After the Helsinki Summit, there is a need for mental shift within the Turkish élite from this rather conflictual bilateral relationship to the perception of the relationship within the process of the enlargement of the Union in which twelve other countries are involved. This mental shift also requires a more co-operative type of a relationship rather than an adversarial one. There is a need for a pattern of co-operation between Turkish and European Union officials in creating a Turkey closer to the European Union. Turkey's inclusion in the enlargement process of the Union will also create a more united Europe and facilitate a more meaningful European project.

1 For a more comprehensive analysis of Turkey's relations with the European Community during the Cold War period, see: A. Eralp, 'Turkey and the EC in the Changing Post-War International System', in Canan Balkır and Allan M. Williams (eds.), *Turkey and Europe*, London: Printer 1993; M. A. Birand, *Türkiye'nin Ortak Pazar Macerası 1959-1985*, Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1985; and I. Tekeli and Selim Ilkin, *Türkiye ve Avrupa Topluluğu*, 2 vols. Ankara: Ümit Yayıncılık, 1991.

2 See A. Makovsky, 'Turkey's Faded European Dream', in *The Parameters of Partnership: Germany, the US and Turkey*, Conference Report, American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, The Johns Hopkins University, 1997, p. 51.

3 These preconditions included: 1) the establishment of satisfactory and stable relations between Greece and Turkey, 2) the settlement of disputes, in particular, by legal process, 3) respect for and protection of minorities and human rights, and 4) support for a political settlement in Cyprus through negotiations under the aegis of the UN.

4 For a detailed analysis of the customs union relationship see C. Balkçr, 'The Customs Union and Beyond', in Libby Rittenberg (ed.), *The Political Economy of Turkey in the Post-Soviet Era*, Westport Praeger, 1998.

5 Commission of the European Communities, *European Strategy for Turkey*, 3 March 1998.

6 Commission of the European Communities, *Regular Report on Turkey's Progress Toward Accession*, 1998.

7 For a more comprehensive analysis of Turkey's role as a pivotal state see Z. Brezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York Basic Books, 1997, and R. Chase, E. Hill and P. Kennedy (eds.), *The Pivotal States: a New Framework for US Policy in the Developing World*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999.

8 See A. Eralp, 'Turkey and the European Union in the Aftermath of the Cold War', in Libby Rittenberg (ed.), *The Political Economy of Turkey in the Post-Soviet Era*, Westport: Praeger, 1998.

9 For an analysis of developments in the European security system and Turkey's role see Ludger Kühnhardt, 'On Germany, Turkey and the United States', in Hüseyin Başç, Jackson Janes and Ludger Kühnhardt (eds.), *Parameters of Partnership: the US, Turkey and Europe*, Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1999.

10 See NATO's Strategic Concept, NATO Press Release NAC-5 (99) 65-24, April 1999.