

# HOW TO INTERPRET TURKEY'S ACCESSION PROCESS WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION?

## A CLASH OF DISCOURSES

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### INTRODUCTION

This essay comprises of two major aims. One is to de-construct Turkey's ongoing accession process with the European Union, by paying considerable attention to the placement of geo-political and security-related considerations in two different readings of this process. The goal here is to give a brief sketch of the two discourses as conceptualised by the Turkish elite. The second, however, is to test the credibility of these discourses as to their capability in explaining the possibility of Turkey's membership in the European Union, by trying to uncover the main rationale behind the EU's approach to enlargement in general and Turkey in particular. To raise a new approach to Turkey's accession process from a security perspective, parameters of which are defined by the EU's security concerns will be aspired in this context.

Of the two current discourses, the pro-EU one constructs the ongoing accession process as the road map that accelerates the pace of Turkey's inclusion in the EU as a full member. The adherents of this view feel committed to the idea of European integration and are content with the current structure of the European Union.<sup>1</sup> This discourse overemphasises the things that Turkey needs to do. The underlying assumption here is that as the accession process unfolds, the quality of Turkey's relationship with the EU and the degree of Turkey's security will improve. This will happen because Turkey will gradually embrace the EU's distinctive security identity, not the other way around.

The Euro-sceptic discourse, on the other hand, questions the current form of the European Union in general and the structure of the ongoing accession process in particular. Although the adherents of this view do not object to the general idea of European Integration, they have a problem with the asymmetric power relationship between the EU members on the one hand and the candidate countries on the other.<sup>2</sup> They tend to characterise the accession process as a well-intended EU policy whose main goals are to de-emphasise Turkey's geo-politically defined strategic-identity and to create the best possible conditions for the EU to absorb Turkey. The underlying assumptions here are that the EU will (can) not admit Turkey as a member for security reasons and that as the accession process runs its course, Turkey will be confronted with grave risks and challenges for its security because the EU's attitude towards Turkey's membership is ambiguous to say the least. At the end of the day, Turkey will become a much weaker country than as it is now in terms of its ability to act as a pivotal geo-political security actor. Contrary to the previous discourse, the Euro-sceptics tend to put the onus on the European Union for all the bad and the good things in the EU-Turkey relations.

In this line of thought, I will first give a short account of how the pro-EU and Euro-sceptic circles in Turkey conceptualise Turkey's relations with the European Union from geo-political and security perspectives. Then, the attention will be focused on the EU, with a view

to uncovering the main security rationale behind the EU's attitude towards Turkey's accession process. This will be achieved by mentioning first, the EU's distinctive security identity, and then, the logic of EU's enlargement process. There are two main objectives of this part. One is to approach to the issue, Turkey's accession process, from the EU's side, whereas the other is to demonstrate that the accession process denotes for the reflection of a rational action on the part of the EU to accept Turkey as a member mainly for its security concerns. As the analysis proceeds, one hopes that the reader will be able to understand Turkey's accession process as a European Union effort aimed at accelerating the transformation process of Turkey's security-identity from a military-intensive one into a civilian-normative one as exemplified by the EU itself. The ultimate goal is to enable one to rid the current discussions on Turkey's EU membership of the irresistible temptations of fear, as the Euro-sceptics tend to flame, and hopes, as the pro-EU circles are inclined to pump.

### **PRO-EU DISCOURSE**

While the quality of the EU-Turkey relationship improved since the announcement of Turkey's official candidacy in Helsinki, a great number of Turks have voiced the view that Turkey has been approaching its long-sought after goal of full EU membership more loudly. For the first time, the European Union treated Turkey as a candidate country, which would be on an equal footing with other candidates. The publication of yearly progress reports since 1998, the devising of the Accession Partnership Document in 2000, the invitation of Turkey by the EU to participate in the European Convention meetings, and the enunciation by the EU's December 2001 Leaken Summit of the possibility of the start of Turkey's accession talks, are all referred to by the pro-EU circles in Turkey as evidences to the willingness of the EU in regard to Turkey's membership.<sup>3</sup>

The adoption of the National Programme by the Turkish Government in March 2001, the three reform packages that the Turkish Assembly has recently enacted and Turkey's co-operative attitudes towards Greece over the Aegean and Cyprus disputes, have all demonstrated, on the other hand, Turkey's seriousness in getting EU membership.<sup>4</sup> According to this line of thought, if Turkey preserves its enthusiasm in complying with the Copenhagen criteria and fulfils the required steps that the Helsinki conclusions and the Accession Partnership Document define, then it would be harder for the Europeans to delay the start of the Turkey's accession talks for long. Once the accession talks start, it would be much easier and somehow automatic that the EU will admit Turkey as a member.

What seems to have led these circles to feel highly encouraged about the possibility of Turkey's EU membership is the logic that 'appears' to rule the current enlargement process of the EU towards the Central and Eastern European countries. Accordingly EU's actions are not geo-political but based on a temporal-mechanical understanding mainly built on the principle that any European country can become a EU member provided that it satisfies the Copenhagen criteria. In other words, this temporal logic implies a kind of ever-enlarging EU whose borders are not defined by clear-cut frontiers.<sup>5</sup>

It is further argued that because the EU has started to treat Turkey as a formal candidate, no one should be entitled to approach to Turkey-EU relations from an exclusion-inclusion nexus. Turkey's candidate status is the most important proof of the EU's willingness to see Turkey as a part of the contemporary European identity. Once you are incorporated into the EU's enlargement process, then you should feel secure, not threatened. The speed, with which

candidates act to meet the EU's accession criteria are what matters in this regard. The faster they do, the earlier they join.

Looking at Turkey's relations with the EU from a geo-political perspective, the pro-EU view holds that Turkey, as an EU member, would be more able to pursue its geo-political interests in its neighbourhood. Because Turkey's current capabilities do not allow her to materialise her security interests in the most effective way, its EU membership would provide her with additional means in this regard. To them, Turkey's eventual membership in the EU would signify the realisation of the permanent peace between Turkey and Europe.<sup>6</sup> If it does not pursue a closer relationship with the EU or just relies on its strategic relationship with the United States, Turkey would not be able to ward off the dangers to its security. In today's world, the EU membership seems to be the only avenue for Turkey to respond effectively to the risks and challenges of globalisation. The sooner Turkey joins the EU, the more secure it would feel, in regard to both hard (conventional) and soft (non-conventional) threats.

To this discourse, the most important strategic issue that appears to have obstructed the effective functioning of Turkey's relations with the western international community in general and the EU in particular for so long is Turkey's discord with Greece over the Aegean Sea and Cyprus. As long as these problems linger, Turkey's position in the West will be questioned. It is only through Turkey's accession process with the EU that the Turkish political-military élite would feel the need to come to a compromise with Greece, that might in the end relieve Turkey of one of the stumbling blocks in its relations with the West. So the Europeanisation of these problems is in fact an opportunity, not an obstacle as the Euro-sceptics argue, for Turkey to come closer to the EU and thus claim its rightful place in the western international community. Because Turkey's membership in the EU would give her the means to check the Greek influence in the region, Turkey should not be nervous of the possibility of the EU's involvement in the solution of these problems. After all, these circles define security on the basis of EU citizenship. If Greeks, Greek Cypriots, Turks and Turkish Cypriots all alike live within the EU, why fear of the Europeanisation of the Cyprus and Aegean disputes.

There seem to exist two major assumptions behind their optimism. One is related to the role that Turks generally assume Greece to play in the EU-Turkey relations. These people are of the view that one should not exaggerate Greece's potential to determine the main dynamics of Turkey's relations with the EU.<sup>7</sup> They are of the opinion that if Turkey satisfies the Copenhagen criteria in earnest and if the major EU members feel optimistic about Turkey's accession to the EU in turn, then it would not be a difficult task to overcome a possible Greek veto. They think that the more Turkey meets the membership criteria, the more pressure the EU would put on Greece to accommodate Turkey. Their second assumption is that Turkey would find it easier to come to a compromise with Greece through the EU. It would be much easier for the Turkish politicians to promote any Turkish-Greek deal to the public if it is struck through the EU. Once the thorny issues drop out of the agenda it would take less effort on Turkey's part to undertake other required steps for membership. The existence of the Turkish-Greek disputes symbolises the most important psychological barrier before Turkey's compliance with the EU accession process.<sup>8</sup>

These circles look at security from a different perspective. In an age of diminished threats from other states, they argue that the main security referents in Turkey should be the society in general and each Turkish citizen in particular. In today's world, the overall security

of a nation-state cannot solely be measured by the degree of exemption from external threats but the degree of happiness and satisfaction its citizens feel. If there is no domestic peace, there is not going to be security.<sup>9</sup>

The emphasis these people put on the societal dimensions of security seems to be in accordance with the current trends in international relations. In today's globalised world, the main security referents have become societies in general and individuals in particular.<sup>10</sup> Security cannot be reached by continuing to define the state as the main security referent at the expense of human beings. The international community defines the greatest threats to international security and stability as those that stem from polities where domestic instability and economic underdevelopment prevail. In case of any domestic turbulence, the dangers would spill over to other places because in today's world, security concerns are trans-regionalised in nature.

Perceived in this fashion, the pro-EU circles in Turkey claim that Turkey's accession process to the EU is something good for the country because it reflects the letter and spirit of such a security mentality they claim to represent. Through pluralisation and liberalisation of the domestic political life, they think Turkish people would be able to discuss every issue and in the end reach satisfactory conclusions. Turkey can only solve its problems of Kurdish separatism and political Islam through the process of politicisation of these issues.<sup>11</sup> They fear that if Turkey turns its face away from the EU, no credible incentive would continue to exist for the establishment élite to try to embrace compromise solutions to the concerning issues. A Turkey, which has solved its major domestic problems through the EU accession process, will be more powerful and secure than as it is now. Above all, the main reason why the pro-EU circles in Turkey think the EU environment offers Turkey security is that they conceive of the EU as a post-modern, multi-cultural and supra-national entity where people of different religious, historical, social and cultural origins can live in harmony and peace.<sup>12</sup>

## **EURO-SCEPTIC DISCOURSE**

This discourse mainly holds that the EU accession process erodes Turkey's security base because it contributes to the weakening of Turkey's geo-political power and identity, as well as the main principles, on which the modern Turkish Republic rest.<sup>13</sup> Conceptualising Turkey's relations with Europe from a 'self-other' prism, Euro-scepticism in Turkey views the current accession process as a well-intended EU policy to construct a Turkey, whose resilience towards the EU's demands would gradually weaken.

The underlying assumption behind the Euro-sceptic logic is that the European Union, as it stands today, is not capable of digesting Turkey's membership for both economic and geo-political reasons. The main concern of today's EU is to successfully adapt to the membership of the twelve Central and Eastern European countries between the 2004-2008 time periods. While this is the case, it seems to be impossible for the EU to accelerate Turkey's accession process. The EU is neither a global geo-political actor, with well-defined strategic interests in the regions around Turkey, nor does it possess the required economic resources to cope with Turkey's membership. So interpreted from this perspective, the Euro-sceptics tend to read Turkey's accession process with the EU by making a strong emphasise on the geo-political and economic calculations on the side of the EU.<sup>14</sup> To them, the ongoing accession process aims at two things. One is to develop a mechanism, which would help the EU to manage its relations with Turkey constructively by keeping her on the EU's orbit but not offering her a clear timetable for membership; the other to slow Turkey's possible admittance to the EU

while the latter will be busy with digesting the EU memberships of the Central and Eastern European countries, (CEECs), and transforming into a geo-political actor of its kind.

The same circles go on to argue that while the geo-political logic dictated the EU's inclusive attitude towards the CEECs, neither an economic rationality nor geo-political imperatives seem to allow for such a possibility vis-à-vis Turkey.

According to this view, what motivated the EU members to extend membership to the CEECs was to thwart the possible hard and soft security threats that an unstable and transitional political environment in those countries might pose to the EU. Due to the geographical closeness of these places to the Western Europe, it was somehow a geo-political necessity for the EU to offer those countries clear membership prospects. To the EU members, the threats that might stem from either the political structure of Turkey itself or the unstable places in Turkey's vicinity can be managed without granting membership to them, but by keeping them on the EU's orbit. In such a scenario Turkey would only be given the role of being a barrier between the EU's zone of peace and the zone of danger in the Greater Middle Eastern region.

To them, the ongoing accession process does only reflect the security interests of the European Union. Besides, there is not a positive relationship between the security of the EU and that of Turkey. It is inconceivable that the accession process serve both the EU's and Turkey's security interests at the same time, because the asymmetric power relationship between the two sides would not allow for this. A Turkey, which strives to meet the EU's membership criteria, would feel less secure than it does now.<sup>15</sup> To this conceptualisation, the Europeans are still captive to their cultural and historical biases towards Turkey. The accession process would also serve as a constraint on Turkey's ability to determine its geo-political priorities first and then to pursue them.

To the Euro-sceptics the best possible arrangement of EU-Turkey relations would take place if the European Union evolves into a global strategic-security actor and then admits Turkey as a member due to the geo-political and military capabilities of the latter. The continuation of EU-Turkey relations on an inter-governmental basis would serve Turkey's interests more because Turkey would not feel obliged to undergo a radical transformation process. Through this way, Turkey would be able to preserve its character of being a strong nation-state functioning on the Kemalist principles. These people are inclined to explain all positive developments in EU-Turkey relations in terms of hard-core geo-political considerations.<sup>16</sup>

The Euro-sceptics would like to see that the EU treats Turkey more positively than other candidates because Turkey has been an important security actor not only in its environment but also in the greater European context. If the EU wants to evolve into a global security actor in the regions surrounding Turkey, it is a must for the EU to agree to Turkey's accession. The facts that Turkey has been contributing to the realisation of the European security interests since the beginning of the Cold War as a legitimate partner and that Turkey has been equipped with the tools to provide for European security, namely its NATO membership and sophisticated military capabilities, seem to have emboldened those circles in their claims.<sup>17</sup>

It is further argued that rather than contributing to the emergence of a healthy liberal-pluralist domestic political environment in the country, the ongoing accession process significantly damages internal peace in Turkey, whose foundations have been built by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923. Ideal as it might seem to have a plural democratic system in a country, especially in a

EU-candidate one, the ongoing accession process in Turkey might result in just the opposite of what is intended. The sensitivity of the establishment élite over the founding principles of the Republic, namely secularism and Turkish nationalism, seems to have led to the cultivation of suspicions on their part in regard to the specific EU demands.<sup>18</sup> To these circles, one should not compare Turkey to the major EU members where pluralism and liberalism in the political arena would not constitute grave risks for the make-up of their societies because their historical paths do not follow the same lines as those of Turkey. Turkey is the inheritor of the Ottoman Empire, a multi-religious and multi-national polity, and therefore is justified to feel more sensitive over the demands on these issues.

The sources of their sensitivities seem to originate from two factors, both of which appear to reflect the legacy of the Ottoman Empire-Europe relations. One is that the Empire had to come to an end just because of the multi-religious and multi-national characters of the political structure of the Ottoman State. It was through the policies of the then European powers that these characteristics of the Empire led to its dismemberment at the hands of its subjects. The second is that the founding fathers of the Republic adopted the Europeanisation ideal from an instrumental perspective with a view to rooting out the traces of multi-nationalism and 'politicisation of religion' in the new State.<sup>19</sup> This is an ongoing process and has not reached a satisfactory conclusion yet. Their fear is that the Europeanisation process might scuttle all the positive achievements done so far.

They also fear that even though regionalisation and the sharing of sovereignty in the European Union generally occur on the basis of economic rationality that might take place in Turkey along ethnic-lines. Moreover, the Euro-sceptics contend that the EU may not necessarily turn out to become a more supra-national entity in the years to come, overemphasising common European interests instead of national ones. For the time being it seems that the allegiance of the peoples of the major EU members to their nation-states far outweighs the level of their identification with the EU. After all, the decision-making mechanisms within the EU, particularly concerning the key areas of foreign, security and defence policies, are mainly of inter-governmental in nature. Strong states have greater degree of representation in all of the EU organs. The logic lying behind the Euro-sceptic view is that if the EU should preserve its inter-governmental character in the years to come, why would Turkey feel obliged to embrace the often-heard understanding of sovereignty, according to which supranational EU organs in Brussels, the central authorities in the capital and the local authorities dispersed throughout the country, share sovereignty.

It is doubtful that Turkey would have to evolve into a more decentralised and federalised political structure as the ongoing accession process runs its course. However, if it were highly likely that the common European interests are going to be defined by stronger EU members, then what would be the use of taking some steps that might contribute to erosion of the central authority in Turkey?<sup>20</sup> What if the major EU members decide to turn the tide away from further integration towards more inter-governmentalism? What if they decide not to take Turkey in even though the latter would have been involved in the transformation process along the EU's demand to higher degrees?

To the Turkish Euro-scepticism, either the accession process itself or the future membership in the EU would certainly constrain Turkey's freedom of action in its surroundings. How would Turkey be able to devote a concerted attention to the external developments in its neighbourhood while being so busy with minimising the possible dangers of the would-be decentralisation process within the country? Because the quasi-imperial structure of the EU

does not allow for the existence of strong nation-states along the peripheries of the EU, Turkey would not be able to define and implement its geo-political interests in the way as it does now. The only option left for Turkey would be to follow the instructions of Brussels and to act as the agent of the EU in the region. Unless the core of the EU does not want, a federalised and highly decentralised Turkey would not be able to affect the geo-political priorities of the Union in such a way that the EU turns its attention to Turkey's neighbourhood and resolves to act as a strategic-security actor.

In this line of thought, the Turkish Euro-sceptics would feel more comfortable with Turkey's ongoing strategic co-operation with the United States and Israel. In the face of common threat perceptions and strategic mentality, they think Turkey would be in a much better position in pursuing its national interests in the Greater Middle Eastern region.<sup>21</sup> The Europeans would most probably not understand Turkey's hard-core security concerns emanating from the fact that Turkey's Middle Eastern neighbours possess weapons of mass destruction and medium-to-long range ballistic missiles. Neither would the EU members be receptive to the idea that Turkey's policies of forming alliances with Israel and the United States and improving its conventional military capabilities are worth in containing such threats as mentioned above.<sup>22</sup>

The Euro-sceptics in Turkey also argue that the current EU policies towards the Turkish-Greek relations are nothing more than the reflection of the EU's determination to contribute to the erosion of Turkey's geo-political power and identity. To them, one of the significant factors that constitutes Turkey's geo-political identity in the Eastern Mediterranean region consists of the idea that the strategic balance between Greece and Turkey, which the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923 and the 1960 treaties on Cyprus had established, needs to be preserved.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, it is pointed out that the real source of Turkey's geo-political identity and power in regard to the region stems from the fact that it is Turkey, not Greece or any other country, that can most effectively preserve and promote European interests in the area.

As a result the Euro-sceptics arrive at two major conclusions. The first is that the EU is not a neutral actor in the resolution of the Turkish-Greek disputes simply because Greece has been a EU member since 1981 and successfully utilises the EU's platforms against Turkey. The second is that the EU membership of Cyprus, without a priori political settlement between the two communities, and a possible resolution of the Aegean disputes through the International Court of Justice in the Hague in line with Greece's position, would certainly militate against Turkey's geo-political identity, power and interests.<sup>24</sup> To the Euro-sceptics, any strategic retreat in Cyprus and the Aegean Sea constitutes the threshold, beyond which Turkey's ability to stand against the future demands of the EU will decrease. If a feeling of inferiority penetrates the minds of the Turkish political-military élite due to the erosion of Turkey's geo-political identity and interests in the region, this would be the most dangerous thing one could imagine.<sup>25</sup>

## **FACING THE REALITY**

In order to test the explanatory power of these divergent discourses in regard to Turkey's accession process with the EU, the following questions should be answered. What is the prevailing logic behind the EU's enlargement policy? What kind of a mentality does the EU accession process seem to rely on? What kind of security actor is the EU? What is the

relationship between the security identity of the European Union and the terms of the EU accession processes?

As the following sections will show, one can also interpret Turkey's accession process with the EU from another perspective, this time approaching to the issue from the EU's side. Contrary to both pro-EU and the Euro-sceptic discourses, this new understanding points to the EU's distinctive security identity in accounting for the logic of EU's enlargement process. Consequently, it is argued that even though the major terms of Turkey's accession process demonstrate the first and foremost of the EU's security identity and interests, Turkey's EU membership would be in conformity with the EU's security identity and interests. Formulated as such, the ongoing accession process aims at paving the way for Turkey's future incorporation into the EU, from a security perspective. The main assumption of this understanding is that there is a positive relationship between the security feelings of the EU and Turkey. The more Turkey is secure, in regard to both hard and soft dimensions, the more the EU will become secure.

In order to build this argument, the following sections will first emphasise the EU's distinctive security identity and later the main rationale that lies behind the EU's accession process. Then, attention will be focused on the main reasons why the EU's hard and soft security interests would be better served by the strengthening of Turkey's security through the implementation of the accession criteria and Turkey's eventual membership in the EU.

## **WHAT KIND OF AN INTERNATIONAL ACTOR IS THE EUROPEAN UNION?**

This section mainly argues that the half-a-century practice of the European Union has resulted in a distinctive security tradition in Europe.

### **Cold War Practice**

Without understanding the Cold War practice of the European Union as a security actor, one cannot be able to comprehend the current logic of EU accession process because the accession criteria are constituted by the EU's distinctive security identity. The EU-based Europe, in the aftermath of the Second World War, was not any longer a conglomerate of independent states with their distinctive domestic and foreign attributes preserved as sacred. Neither was it a non-security organisation where the issues of low politics were on the agenda. By coexisting within the EU, member states could gradually converge on common liberal and democratic norms. Hence, the EU's integration process started to change the rules of the old inter-state game in the European theatre by rendering the balance of power politics logic redundant.<sup>26</sup>

While it is mostly claimed that NATO was the main security organisation that institutionalised the American military presence in Europe, checked the German influence and protected the Europeans against the external threat stemming from the East, one should not underestimate the role of the EU in the maintenance of peace and security in the Western Europe.<sup>27</sup> Forming a collective defence alliance against the Soviet Union proved to be much easier a task than the efforts to stem the tide of balance of power logic among the old belligerent powers of the Western Europe. This became possible through the 'politicisation' of the main security issues. The logic was that if issues of concern were discussed politically, it would be more difficult for the power-holders to conceptualise them as security issues. In other words, increasing politicisation process would result in an outcome whereby one would find it more difficult to depict any issue of discussion as a security threat that would in turn

legitimise the threat and use of force in its eradication. When no specific issue is defined as an existential threat by any of the participants of the domestic discussion process, then consensus would prevail and the parties would be able to end up with compromise solutions.<sup>28</sup>

However, the crucial point in this regard was, and still is, that a successful ‘desecurisation’ process would require the emergence of a more inclusive ‘self-other’ relationship between the discussants than a classical balance of power arrangement would envisage. And it was the post-sovereign and quasi-imperial institutional environment of the EU, with its norms of ‘peace’, ‘liberty’, ‘human rights’, ‘rule of law’ and ‘pluralist democracy’<sup>29</sup>, that made it possible for a more inclusive ‘self-other’ relationship to take root among the members. It was also hoped that if the EU members succeeded in desecuritising their domestic politics, they would more easily desecuritise their external politics.

Thought of this way, if a state remains to be a unitary, strictly authoritarian, overtly centralised, and uni-cultural polity, then it would be nearly impossible for her to be admitted to the EU, since the supranational characteristics of the EU’s institutional environment would make life easier only for those states, which would be content with either the upward or downward diffusion of sovereignty. To this logic ‘more integration’ and ‘EU-level centralisation’ would bring more collective identities, which would in turn result in more security.

The important point here is that the commonality of the strategic-security considerations of the Western European countries against the communist Soviet danger constituted only one of the factors that led them to build the EU. The more important reason was to pacify the relations among the main belligerents of the pre-war era, namely Germany and France.

### **Post-Cold War Practice**

The 1990s have seen that the EU has evolved into a mixture of civilian-normative-international actor, rather than a military one possessing only strategic-security actorness. While the civilian dimension of the EU’s identity concerns the huge economic resources of the EU members at their disposal, its normative dimension stems from its ability to determine the confines of ‘normalcy’ in global international society. Being a ‘power of attraction’, the European Union is able to set the normative standards of the global society. It does this mainly through the mechanisms of the accession processes.<sup>30</sup> The aspirant countries are in one sense encouraged by the European Union to adapt their socio-economic and political structures to the existing EU norms. Through this way, it is hoped that the structural causes of potential instabilities and conflicts would fade away.

Despite all these, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that today’s EU possesses the traits of an embryonic military actor as well. Since the Maastricht Treaty of 1991, the EU has taken some important steps on the way to becoming a global military actor. Following the failures in the territories of the former Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, first in Bosnia and then in Kosovo, the EU members increased their efforts to make the EU a military security actor able to speak and act with one voice.

However, on balance today’s EU is more of a normative-civilian actor than a global military one. It is still the case that there is not enough cohesion among the EU members as for geo-political and strategic issues. In geo-political terms, it seems that each individual EU member, particularly those with an imperial legacy, has more of a role as an actor than the EU itself as

an institution. Despite the reinvigorated European efforts to turn the EU into a military actor in the EU's Cologne Summit in June 1999, the fact that the EU members have been further scaling down their military spending seems to have blocked this initiative as well. The EU's determination to make operational a rapid reaction force of 60,000 by the end of 2003 might seriously founder on the low military budgets of the member states.<sup>31</sup>

Even though one can safely claim that the EU is gradually evolving into an international actor that has a military logic, this would in no way be in accordance with the expectations of the classical real politik and balance of power security understandings. This is mainly for two reasons. First, the reason why the EU members set into motion the Common Foreign and Security Policy was to prevent the re-emergence of balance of power politics among the EU members. In the face of the elimination of the Soviet threat in the East, the Europeans feared that their Cold War ally across the Atlantic might have decided to disengage from Europe. In such a case, they pondered that the balance of power politics might have revisited them. Consequently, the prime motivation behind the Europeans' determination to add a strategic component to their evolving economic and political union was not to turn the EU into a global security actor but to prevent the major EU members from embracing a real politik security identity and behaviour.

Second, the European Security and Defence Policy, which was set into motion in the EU's Helsinki Summit in December 1999, aimed at the establishment of a European Rapid Reaction Force, dubbed as the European Army, for the tasks of humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping and conflict management. The low end of the Petersberg tasks did not foresee the creation of a European Army with war-fighting capabilities to be deployable in any part of the globe. The major goal of the European Army has been to enable the EU members to respond to any future crisis of the Yugoslavian-kind on the European continent.<sup>32</sup>

It seems that the EU's approach towards the configuration of the Rapid Reaction Force is in accordance with its security understanding and threat perceptions in the post-Cold War era. It has been observed that the security referents within the post-Westphalian Europe have gradually become 'society' and 'individuals', replacing the 'nation-state'.<sup>33</sup> The EU members' share in the idea that today's world poses no conventional threats to Europe's security. To them, the sources of new threats and risks to European security lie in the unstable regions on the peripheries of Europe. According to them, the greatest risks and challenges to the European security are posed by the undemocratic and unstable regions located on a rim stretching from northwest Africa passing through the Balkans and reaching the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions. Problems that might emanate from the unhealthy domestic structures of the countries located on these regions include immigration to the developed European countries, ethnic intra-state wars, environmental pollution, drug trafficking, organised crime and so on.<sup>34</sup>

This security logic also manifests itself in the EU's approach towards the use of force in dealing with terrorist or other non-conventional security threats. The EU members seem to be predisposed to use military instruments on the condition that such actions would contribute to the strengthening of the socio-political structures in unstable countries. For them, the use of military instruments does not constitute an end in itself in eradicating structural conflicts around the peripheries of the continent, but rather as a means to pave the way for the efficient implementation of the strategy of 'structural development'. To this logic, efforts to endow the EU with a military body would not mean that the EU is inclined to evolve into a military security actor on a global scale, but rather a civilian power who might make use of military

means in order to materialise its civilian goals. For the EU's development aids to unstable regions around Europe's peripheries to become successful in rooting out the structural causes of instability and terrorism, it has now become a necessity on the part of the EU to sometimes rely on military means (European Army). What the EU hopes is at least to provide for a minimum degree of internal stability in those areas, defined as the absence of militarised warfare, before investing in structural development.<sup>35</sup>

The post September 11 developments have made it clear that there is a huge difference between the EU's conception of its rapid reaction force and the US' understanding of its military doctrine. While the US has been inclined to use its war-fighting capabilities in its efforts to root out the causes of global terror, the EU members have been inclined to rely on soft-security measures in their struggles with terrorism. This is the direct result of the EU's civilian security culture, which does not idealise the establishment of a war-making European army on a global scale.<sup>36</sup>

Based on this distinctive security conceptualisation within the EU area, one can safely argue that Turkey's possible contributions to the EU's hard security interests may not be too determining a factor for the EU to view Turkey's membership positively in the short run. However, Turkey's EU membership prospects would skyrocket if the ongoing accession process succeeded in paving the way for Turkey's adoption of the EU's distinctive security identity and the EU members did not lose their penchant to turn their Union into a global security actor.

## **THE LOGIC OF EU ACCESSION PROCESS**

The main functions of the EU's accession process are twofold. One is to preserve and promote the peculiar security identity of the European Union towards the Central, East and Southeastern parts of the continent. The other is to pave the way for the transformation of the EU into a global security actor, which differs from other global actors on the basis of its distinctive security modelling. If any particular country were listed among the candidates for membership, then it would mean that the EU members have agreed to the incorporation of that country into the EU's own security model and space.

For any country to join the EU, the first requirement is that the conceptual basis and dynamics of the EU's security modelling needs to be adopted. It is only through this way that the EU would feel itself secure from the possible sources of threat that may originate from the EU's periphery. Thought of this way, the EU accession process first and foremost aims at the acceleration of this process.<sup>37</sup>

The EU operates as a modern quasi-empire in concentric circles, with a group of countries located at the centre and defining the core values and interests of the Union while other countries dispersed along the peripheries of the European continent with minor capability to set the course of the Union. Due to its imperial power-configuration, the EU requires relatively weak nation-states, which would be less resilient to the demands of supranationalism.<sup>38</sup>

Even though the EU is a quasi-empire reflecting mainly the interests of the core members, the major source of its legitimacy in the eyes of the countries lying along the peripheries of the continent stems from the fact that it has been a 'power of attraction' as well.<sup>39</sup> Setting the standards of normalcy and appropriate behaviour in interstate and transnational relations, the

EU functions as a soft-security actor. For the continuation of this situation, both the existing core members of the EU need to preserve their preponderance and the accession process needs to last as long as possible. Thought of this way, one can argue that one of the functions of the accession process is to contribute to the preservation of the EU's role of being a 'power of attraction', rather than to accelerate the EU membership processes of the candidate countries.

Another function of the ongoing EU accession processes is to minimise the possible dangers of the EU's 'widening' to the EU's 'deepening'. The way the EU adopts in enlarging its boundaries was meant to minimise the negative consequences of this process on its distinctive security identity as a global actor. The temporal understanding of widening process has not been an end in itself, but only a means intended to enable the EU members to transform their club into a more powerful international actor in global arena.

A related point in this regard is that the EU has not adopted an identical view in regard to the EU membership of all candidate countries. It is not the performance of the candidate countries in meeting the accession criteria per se, but the EU's ability to absorb them into the emerging EU's international identity that appears to define the EU's response towards enlargement.<sup>40</sup> Looking from this perspective, one could interpret the EU's accession process as a special EU strategy aimed at transforming the socio-political, economic and security make-up of candidate countries in such a way that their future accession to the EU would not create great obstacles to the EU's emerging identity and institutional set-up. Conceived of this way, one could easily comprehend the different attitudes that the EU has adopted in regard to different candidates. The more difficult the absorption of any country into the EU is, the more ambiguous and the more detailed the accession criteria the EU adopts towards that particular country. This is a rational course of action that fits well into the EU's post-Cold War deepening process.

In general terms, the EU's course of action towards candidate countries are affected by the following criteria: The mood of the European public opinion, the economic rationality of enlargement, the institutional set-up of the EU organs, the degree of EU's ideational commitment towards their membership, and the geo-political factors. If the citizens of the current EU members were sympathetic towards the EU's enlargement to the East and would like to see their Union evolve into a supranational international actor; if the inclusion of any particular country would incur tolerable economic losses; if the incorporation of the new members would not damage the functioning of the EU's organs in an efficient and smooth way; if there were not serious doubts on the European identity of the candidate countries; and if the inclusion of new members could enable the EU to feel more secure and stable and act as a credible and strong international actor, then it would be much easier for the current EU members to cast their votes on enlargement in an affirmative way.

Even though, it is the case that Turkey's membership in the EU might not be possible in the short-term for many of the above-mentioned criteria, the hard and soft security concerns of the EU appear to dictate a more accommodating European attitude towards Turkey's incorporation into the EU.

## **AN ALTERNATIVE LOGIC:**

### **THE ACCESSION PROCESS CONTRIBUTES TO THE SECURITY OF THE EU**

Why might the hard and soft security interests of the EU lead one to read the ongoing Turkey's accession process as the demonstration of the EU's willingness to admit Turkey as a member? What are the possible reasons for the EU to view Turkey's membership positively from a security perspective?

In the short-run, Turkey's ongoing transformation process along the accession criteria serves the EU's security interests by strengthening Turkey's soft security identities directly and the EU's indirectly. In the long-run, Turkey's accession to the EU will help the latter realise its hard and soft security interests because Turkey's membership would accelerate the transformation of the EU into a global security actor endowed with the capability to define the security parameters in the Greater Middle Eastern region.

This is mainly because of the fact that the enlargement of the EU's borders to further East and South constitutes the main mechanism for the fulfilment of the EU's security interests. To this logic, the EU's widening should never stop. The EU cannot reach ultimate security by fixing its borders at some definite frontiers and exclude a number of countries outside the EU area. The EU cannot feel secure from the soft-security threats likely to emanate from the South and Southeastern peripheries of the continent by creating a European fortress and taking up defensive measures against those countries. The success of the EU's security-building attempts seems to have been relied on the process of constructive engagement of those countries lying in the periphery, not containment of them.<sup>41</sup> Keeping Turkey outside the EU would not help the Europeans feel more secure and stable because the longer Turkey is left outside the EU, the more threatening and unstable an environment would exist in the South-eastern Europe. Assuming that Turkey would be undertaking all the steps foreseen by its accession process with the EU but the latter does not admit the former into membership, the threats of soft-security kinds to the EU's stability and prosperity would abound.

Given that Turkey is located at the centre of the EU's turbulent neighbourhood, the effects of any domestic unrest and internal chaos there would certainly spill over to areas adjacent to it, that might in the end reach the EU's own area. Why would the EU work for the transpiring of such a scenario, knowing that it would be disastrous for the EU itself?

The EU, which has significant security interests (soft and hard) in the regions surrounding Turkey, particularly Caucasus, the Central Asia and the Caspian Sea area, should be more receptive to Turkey's memberships for the following reasons.

First, Turkey, with its well-developed military capabilities and the culture of co-operation with the many of the EU members, might enable the emerging European Rapid Reaction Force to perform its tasks, which the ESDP defines. With Turkey's inclusion in this arrangement, the EU would be much more capable of taking on the military tasks, which it failed to perform during the Bosnian and Kosova crisis in the 1990s.<sup>42</sup>

Second, Turkey, which has strong interests in the regions mentioned above, could well play the bridge role for the EU to extend its influence to those areas. The EU would be more able to pursue its interests in those regions if Turkey joins and act as a EU country.

Third, the core of the EU would feel more secure and stable if a EU member-Turkey guards the borders of the EU against the security threats originating from the Greater Middle Eastern regions. Just as the role that Turkey played during the Cold War era, Turkey can play a similar role in today's international conjecture. Just as one cannot overlook Turkey's alliance with the EU members against the Russians in the preservation of the security and stability in Europe during the Cold War era, the same logic is still relevant in today's world. Without Turkey's contribution, it would be the case that Europe would not reach the optimum level of security through its own efforts. While it was enough for the EU to ally with Turkey against an external enemy of the conventional type during the Cold War era, this mode of arrangement would not work today. Unless Turkey joins the EU as a full member, Turkey's probable contribution to the EU's security would not materialise to the degree the EU members hope to see. Leaving Turkey outside the EU and treating her as a barrier against the soft (more dangerous) and hard (less dangerous) security threats would not operate today because globalisation and trans-regionalisation of security issues would not allow for it.<sup>43</sup>

Fourth, a Turkey, which conceptualises its national security interests in regard to the regions mentioned above in such a way that does not pay enough attention to the EU's concerns, would not help the EU to evolve into a global security actor of its kind. If the transatlantic rift between the EU and the US further widens in the years to come, Turkey's position in this equation would become fundamentally important for the EU. If Turkey continues to ally with the United States and Israel against the hard security threats in the region, this would certainly curb the potential geo-political influence of the EU. After all what would be at stake is the EU's way of security modelling.

It seems that the US model of security pays attention to hard security threats in the region with the strategies of containment and exclusion privileged over the strategies of engagement and inclusion. One can also add to these the new security doctrine of the pre-emptive attack, which aims at rooting out the sources of potential threats to US security interests.<sup>44</sup> If the US model takes the upper hand in the Greater Middle Eastern region, this would result in an awkward situation with respect to EU's security interests. While the non-real politik and normative-civilian security model of the EU will be confined to the EU's own area, the Greater Middle Eastern region will continue to operate on the basis of the old balance of power logic with the security mentality overemphasising exclusion and containment over inclusion and engagement. The danger for the EU would be that if Turkey were included in the US model, this would curtail the success of the EU members both to sustain their model of security in Europe and to transfer it to the peripheries of the continent. In the long run, this would contribute to the erosion of EU's security feeling in the region.

Fifth, in today's globalised world the quality of EU's security and stability cannot be fully improved by turning a blind eye to the domestic economic and socio-political political situation in Turkey. The EU cannot feel more secure and stable by isolating and excluding Turkey from its non-real politik security arrangement. It seems that there is a close relationship between the quality and level of Turkey's accession process with the EU and the quality of EU's security feeling. The further Turkey's domestic arrangement departs from that of the EU, the more domestic turbulence and chaos takes place in Turkey. The more internal instability takes root in Turkey, the less secure the EU would feel itself because the kind of security threats, which the EU tries to eliminate, would abound. If the degree and scope of the threats, which Turkey's domestic instability might pose to the EU, would be much greater and profound than those the domestic instability in the Central and Eastern European countries

might cause, then the level and quality of EU's engagement with Turkey should be at higher stages than it is now.

It is the view of this essay that the highly pessimistic evaluation of the EU's accession process by the Euro-sceptics does not seem to hold true in the face of the emerging security identity of the European Union. Given that the EU of the post-Cold War era has developed a new definition of security, which highlights soft-security concerns, the weakening of Turkey's domestic order along federalised and decentralised lines, as argued by the Euro-sceptics, would not serve the EU's own security interests. If mass migration, domestic instability, flow of refugees to Europe and possibility of civil wars are referred to by the Europeans as among the future threats to the EU's security, then it would be an irrational action on the part of the EU members to stir up the domestic order in Turkey and thus to contribute to the enfeebling of Turkey's internal stability. Otherwise, the EU will be confronted with grave security risks, whose scope and impact would be felt much more profound than the wars in the territories of the Former Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia have generated.

When globalisation makes it inevitable to conceive of the EU's security interests independent from the developments along the EU's southeastern and eastern Mediterranean borders, it becomes imperative for the EU to contribute to the strengthening of stable domestic orders in these regions. It is all the more clear today that the EU, with its interstate and inter-societal dimensions, cannot be more secure and stable unless the EU's peripheries are secure and stable.<sup>45</sup> Thought of this way, a fortress Europe with definite boundaries would not help the Europeans feel secure. Turning a blind eye to the developments around the EU's periphery would backfire and cause significant security problems for the EU itself.

A Turkey, which is a poor country with a per capita income of lower than three thousand dollars; which has an ever-growing population of 70 million; whose economy goes from crisis to crisis; whose domestic socio-political order is broken down to pieces with people of different ethnic origins resorting to force in the pursuit of their rights; where the adherents of radical Islam and Kurdish separatism approach towards Turkey's accession process with the EU from an instrumental perspective in order to mould Turkey's domestic political arrangement in non-European ways; whose foreign and security policy behaviours are based on a real politik culture with exclusionist and isolationist undertones overemphasised; whose national identity continues to be captured by exclusionist identity claims of Islamists, Turkish nationalists and Europeanists, would not serve the EU's security interests in the years to come.

Sixth, and the timeliest reason for a consistent and receptive EU attitude towards Turkey's membership in the EU concerns the post-September 11 developments. If the European Union wants to see that its security model is applied to the global struggle with terrorism, Turkey's incorporation into the EU family is highly significant in this regard. This is so mainly for the following reasons. First, Turkey's membership in the EU would bolster the claims of those, who argue that war on terrorism should not be continued on the basis of a clash of civilisation between the developed Christian North and the undeveloped Muslim South. Second, Turkey's EU membership would shore up the argument of those that it is not predestined that a country, whose population is overwhelmingly Muslim and whose economic power lags far behind those of the developed countries, can never join the EU, currently a Christian club of developed European states. Third, Turkey's inclusion in the EU contributes to the sustaining of the EU's distinctive security identity, which the EU members claim is more helpful in dealing with threats likely to emanate from global terror. If 'secularism', 'cosmopolitanism',

‘multi-nationalism’, ‘desecuritisation’, ‘universal human rights’, ‘engagement’, ‘inclusion’, ‘plural-liberal democracy’, ‘civic nationalism’, ‘constructive dialogue and communication’ were the main security norms, on which the EU integration project has been built, then Turkey’s accession to the EU would certainly contribute to the success of these norms and the EU’s struggle with global terror.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above analysis, one can reach the following conclusions. The first is that the reading of the Euro-sceptics of Turkey’s accession process seems to have been one-sided and really pessimistic about the prospects of Turkey’s accession to the EU. On the other hand, the pro-EU circles are highly optimistic and often fail to take the EU-originated factors into account. It seems that the major goal of the EU has not been to de-emphasise Turkey’s geopolitical identity and power and thus to contribute to its insecurity, but to minimise the costs of the enlargement process on its distinctive security identity. Acting on a rational basis, the Europeans have been trying to minimise the costs of Turkey’s ongoing relationship with the EU.

Conceived of this way, it has been argued here that Turkey’s accession process with the EU can also be read as a rational course of action on the side of the EU members that contributes to the materialisation of the EU’s security interests. It is through the Europeanisation of Turkey’s security identity that the EU feels itself secure. Contrary to the Turkish Euro-sceptics, this new approach has asserted that the ongoing accession process does not only serve the EU’s security interests but those of Turkey as well. Otherwise, if Turkey goes through a process of insecurity and instability, this will only contribute to the worsening of EU’s security.

Given this, the Turkish elite should not make a great mistake by interpreting the EU’s resolve to establish a European Army along the lines of European Security and Defence Policy as a well-designed European attempt at transforming the EU into a global military security actor like the United States or NATO. Otherwise, a Turkish accession strategy that incessantly emphasises Turkey’s capabilities as a military security actor would militate against Turkey’s accession to the EU in the short-run. Such kind of a strategy would both delay Turkey’s own efforts in adopting the EU’s own security identity and be perceived by the EU members as the signs of Turkey’s reluctance to join the EU. The optimum strategy for the Turkish elite would be that they put a stress on Turkey’s possible contributions to the preservation and promotion of the EU’s distinctive security identity. This they can do better and in a more efficient way in the wake of the post-September 11 world.<sup>46</sup>

In fact, Turkey’s EU membership seems to be the greatest challenge for the EU in the years to come. Depending on the evolution of Turkey-EU relations, one would be able to assess the performance of the EU’s own security modelling. Just as the dynamics of Franco-German relations constituted the main challenge for the EU in the wake of the Second World War, the evolutionary pattern of Turkey-EU relations will play the same role in the years to come. The stakes are going to be harder for the EU in the new world post-September 11. If the EU contributes to Turkey’s internalisation of the EU’s distinctive security identity by offering Turkey a time-table for its accession as a carrot, then both Turkey’s Europeanisation process

would accelerate and the EU would itself secure and able to play the role of global security actor.

The danger for Turkey does not lie, as the Euro-sceptics point out, in Turkey's efforts in complying with the membership criteria. It will, however, take place, as the pro-EU circles fail to notice, if the EU does not agree to Turkey's membership despite Turkish efforts to internalise the EU's distinctive security culture. The greatest danger to a healthy Turkey-EU security relationship will come from an ambiguous EU attitude towards Turkey's EU membership. In such a case, the parties would view each other as threats to their distinctive security interests, rather than as 'security providers'. The longer Turkey's accession process with the EU lasts without a strong EU commitment towards Turkey's membership, the more likely it would be that the EU would face the security threats and challenges, which it tries to eradicate.

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2 Ibid.

3 Bahadır Kaleağası, "'Zarar Verdi" Görüşü Yanlış', *Radikal*, 30 May 2002.

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7 Mehmet Uğur, *The European Union and Turkey: An Anchor/Credibility Dilemma*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, pp. 161-98.

8 Özdağ, op.cit. p. 58.

9 Various liberal-oriented opinions on this issue can be reached at the internet site of the Association for Liberal Thinking (Liberal Düşünce Topluluğu) at: < <http://liberal-dt.org.tr/index.htm> > For example see İhsan Dağı, 'Ulusal Güvenlik: Kimin Güvenliği (National Security: Whose Security)' at:

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<[http://www.radikal.com.tr/veriler/2002/08/30/haber\\_48169.php?oturum=a7810bf66d3fa41829d704ed754d1d72](http://www.radikal.com.tr/veriler/2002/08/30/haber_48169.php?oturum=a7810bf66d3fa41829d704ed754d1d72)>

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- 15 Erol Manisalı, *Türkiye-Avrupa İlişkilerinde Sessiz Darbe (A silent coup in Turkey-Europe Relations)*, Istanbul: Derin Yayınları, 2002.
- 16 İlhan (2000), op.cit.
- 17 For example see Meltem Müftüler-Baç, ‘Turkey’s Role in the EU’s Security and Foreign Policies’, *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 489-502.
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