

## TURKEY AND THE EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS: A HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT\*

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### ÖZET

*Bir yandan “öteki” kavramı bağlamında şekillenen karşılıklı korkular, diğer yandan da Atatürk’ün işaret ettiği çağdaş medeniyet seviyesini yakalama hedefi ikilemindeki Türkiye, bu makale yayınlandığında, son kırk yıldır dış politikasında her zaman önemli yerini koruyan Avrupa projesinde artık önemli bir eşiği ya hasarsız bir şekilde geçmiş ya da hem içte hem de dışarıda problemlili bir döneme girmiş bulunacak. Hemen hemen her gün farklı gelişmeler yaşanan Türkiye-Avrupa Birliği (AB) ilişkilerine tarihsel bir açıdan bakmak, bu makalenin hedefidir.*

*Makalede gelişmeler kronolojik olarak ele alınmış olup, olayların birbirleriyle ilişkisi de göz önünde bulundurulmuştur. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye’nin AB ile ilişkileri beş ana aşamada incelenmiştir. İlk asama, resmi olarak da ilişkilerin başladığı Ankara Anlaşması ve sonrasındaki gelişmeler; ikinci asama olarak sorunlu 1970’lerden 1987’deki tam üyelik başvurusuna kadar olan dönem; üçüncü asama ve ilk başarı olarak Gümrük Birliği; dördüncü asama olarak 1997 Lüksembourg Zirvesi’nden 1999 Helsinki Zirvesi’ne kadar geçen problemlili dönem ve son olarak da Helsinki sonrası dönem ile son yapılan reformlar ele alınmıştır. Sonuç kısmında ise, tarihsel gelişmeler ışığında Türkiye-AB ilişkilerinin geleceği tartışılmıştır.*

***Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye, Avrupa Birliği, Genişleme, Tarih, Türk Dış Politikası, Ankara Anlaşması, Katma Protokol, Gümrük Birliği, Gündem 2000, 1997 AB Lüksembourg Zirvesi, 1999 AB Helsinki Zirvesi, Türkiye için Katılım Ortaklığı Belgesi, AB Müktesebatının Üstlenmesine İlişkin Ulusal Program, Reform Paketleri*

\* The writer would like to express his special thanks to Prof. Dr. Hüseyin Bağcı for his support, help and encouragement during the preparation of this paper.

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**Key words:** *Turkey, European Union, Enlargement, History, Turkish Foreign Policy, Ankara Agreement, Additional Protocol, Customs Union, Agenda 2000, 1997 EU Luxembourg Summit, 1999 EU Helsinki Summit, Accession Partnership Document for Turkey, National Program for the Adoption of the EU Acquis, Reform Packages*

“There is only one way to escape these dangers, which is to emulate the progress of the Europeans in science, industry and military and legal organization, in other words to equal them in civilization. And the only way to do this is to enter the European civilization completely.”<sup>1</sup>

In an article evaluating Turkey’s place in Europe, Dietrich Jung cited these words of Ziya Gökalp, which express Turkey’s desire to be a European state on the one hand, and the deeply rooted Turkish mistrust vis-à-vis the intentions of Europe on the other. This paradox of Turkey in her relations to Europe resembles the two sharp sides of a knife. Inheriting an Ottoman heritage after the First World War, Turkey faced with the bad intentions of the Western powers on the Turkish territory. These intentions were materialized by the Sèvres Treaty which was signed on August 10, 1920. According to the treaty, Turkey was partitioned among the allied powers, and also Armenians and Kurds were to receive autonomy. Although this treaty was not legal due to the fact that it has never been ratified by any Turkish parliament, it is important in showing the real intentions of Western countries on Turkey.<sup>2</sup> Bearing these intentions in mind, Turkey was always critical to the Western countries at the first years after the proclamation of the Republic in 1923. Like the experience of the division of the Ottoman Empire basing on religious and ethnic reasons by the West, the criteria set by the European Union for Turkey’s accession were met by suspicion by Turkish politicians in recent years.<sup>3</sup> However, at the same time, Atatürk -the founder of the Turkish Republic- pointed out the West as the civilizational model for Turkey in the transformation of the country. Within this situation, during the Second World War, Turkish foreign policy was to “play one power off against another” according to William Hale.<sup>4</sup> However, with the onset of the Cold War, Turkey had to find a way within the bipolar framework of the world politics. In that respect, the year 1946 is a major turning point in

<sup>1</sup> Ziya Gökalp, **The Principles of Turkism**, translated by Robert Devereux, Leiden: Brill, 1968 pp. 45-46, in Dietrich Jung, **Turkey and Europe: Ongoing Hypocrisy?** Copenhagen, Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, 2001, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> William Hale, **Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000**, London, Frank Cass Publishers, 2000, pp.45-46.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, **Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye’nin Uluslararası Konumu** İstanbul, Küre Yayınları, 2001 p. 515.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Turkey's modern political and economic development.<sup>5</sup> In 1946, Turkey decisively entered into the Western camp as part of the strategic alliance against Communism, and also at the same year Turkey started the multiparty system in domestic politics. Also, here it is important to notice that Turkey's inclusion in the Marshall Plan is an important indicator that Turkey is considered as a part of the Western camp. Also, just one week after the declaration by Robert Schuman for a united Europe, Turkey held the first free and fair elections on May 14, 1950. Within the Cold War framework, the formulation of Turkish foreign policy turned out to be emphasizing the strategic importance of Turkey in the region rather than actively participating in the East-West conflict.<sup>6</sup> Also, for Turkey, good relations with the Western Europeans meant good relations with the United States (US), mainly because they were partners of the US, rather than independent political actors as they had been before the Second World War.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, security considerations formed the centerpiece of Ankara's post-1945 diplomatic and political relations with the West, and especially with Washington. NATO membership and strategic alliance by the US were seen as vital, both by Ankara and by her western allies, for a country that lay on the southern flank of the Soviet Union. Also, the West's enthusiasm about the inclusion of Turkey to its institutional structures encouraged Turkey to pursue this western path in its diplomatic prioritization. In this way, Turkey as an Islamic and a semi-developed country found herself in the Western institutions such as joining the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1948, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Council of Europe in 1949. Turkey is also the second country applied for the membership to the European Economic Community (EEC) after Greece. The economic problems encountered by the Democrat Party Government in Turkey was the immediate reason behind Turkey's application. Also, the possible membership in the Common Market was thought by some Democrat Party deputies to serve to generate support for the party in domestic politics.<sup>8</sup>

### **BEGINNING OF THE RELATIONS: THE ANKARA AGREEMENT**

The Common Market was perceived as a modernization project and the policy-makers thought that Turkey should be a part of this Western project. Also, the Greek factor was of great importance in Turkey's application to the

<sup>5</sup> Canan Balkır, and Allan M. Williams [eds.], "Introduction: Turkey and Europe", **Turkey and Europe**, London and New York, Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1993, pp. 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> Atilla Eralp, "Turkey and the European Community in the Changing Post-war International System" in Canan Balkır, and Allan M. Williams, [eds.] **Turkey and Europe** London and New York, Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1993, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Hale, **op.cit.**, in note 2, p. 174.

<sup>8</sup> Çağrı Erhan, and Tuğrul Arat, "AET'yle İlişkiler" in Baskın Oran, [ed.] **Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar**, cilt 1 İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2002, p. 814.

EEC.<sup>9</sup> Just sixteen days after the Greek application, Turkey decided to apply for membership and later on signed the agreement after ignoring İsmet İnönü who was critical to the idea at first.<sup>10</sup> Turkish policy-makers thought that if Greece would become a member to the Common Market alone, this would be to the detriment of the Turkish interests, and Greece would use her position vis-à-vis Turkey, which came out to be true in the following decades after their application. Also, Turkey did not want to leave the European market to Greece. Under the Adnan Menderes Government, Turkey applied and after the application, 10 sets of negotiations were held before signing the Ankara Agreement between Turkey and the EEC.

Ankara Agreement is an association agreement in type and was signed on September 1, 1963.<sup>11</sup> It aimed at securing Turkey's full membership in the EEC through the establishment of three phases of a customs union which would serve as an instrument to bring about eventual integration between Turkey and the EEC. Within the period of four years from 1959 to 1963, the negotiations were problematic since because Turkey experienced a military takeover in May 27, 1960, and parliamentary politics were suspended for a period of eighteen months. However, in the end, the agreement was signed and the official relation between Turkey and the EEC started from that time on. The Ankara Agreement envisaged three stages: preparatory period, transitional period and final period, i.e. the Customs Union between Turkey and the EEC. At the first stage, political factors were predominant rather than economic factors. Economically, Turkey was not eligible for a membership, and also for Europe, manpower was a necessity for reconstruction. Therefore, this stage included the free movement of workers in Europe. This stage was put by the EEC unilaterally, and it brought no obligation to Turkey. This stage included the extension of preferential trading conditions to Turkey and some direct financial aid. The second stage was the transition stage. During this stage, both sides would eliminate all barriers to trade, and finally, as the third stage to establish a Customs Union. However, Turkey insisted on the immediate passage through the transitional stage. When Süleyman Demirel came to power in 1965, his government started some initiatives for Turkey to pass the second stage in 1967. The reason behind this motive is to show that the Demirel Government wanted to achieve the full membership to the EEC and thus to get the public support.<sup>12</sup> However, the

<sup>9</sup> Fulya Kip-Barnard, "The Europeanisation of the Turkish-Greek Dispute: The Greek Factor in Turkey EC/EU Relations" in *Journal for Studies on Turkey*, Essen, Stiftung Zentrum für Türkeistudien, 2002, p. 29; also Spyros A.Sofos, "Reluctant Europeans? European Integration and the transformation of Turkish Politics" in K. Featherstone, and George Kazamias, [eds.] *Europeanization and the Southern Periphery*, London, Frank Cass, 2001, p. 246.

<sup>10</sup> Mehmet Ali Birand, *Türkiye'nin Avrupa Macerası: 1959-1999*, İstanbul, Doğan Kitapçılık AŞ., 2000, pp. 156-158.

<sup>11</sup> For the full text of the Ankara Agreement please visit <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/adc/mfa303.htm>>

<sup>12</sup> Erhan and Arat, *op.cit.*, in note 7, p. 839.

Islamists led by Necmettin Erbakan were against integration with the West on both ideological and protectionist grounds.<sup>13</sup> Apart from these political actors, the State Planning Organization (SPO) was also against the further integration with the EEC, because SPO was mainly composed of two groups: Islamists and leftists who were both against further integration with the West.<sup>14</sup> SPO, on the one hand accused the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of selling the country by trying to enter the EEC, while MFA on the other hand accused the SPO of religious fanaticism.<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly, the issue of integration with the West has shown the shifts in the attitudes of the politicians when they are in opposition and in government. Although Erbakan was against further integration with the West and claiming that the West is a Christian club, he formed a coalition government with Tansu Çiller who had previously made Turkey enter the Customs Union. As put by William Hale, this government between Erbakan and Çiller “looked like a car with two drivers, each trying to steer it in opposite directions.”<sup>16</sup> Turkey was Another important development is seen in recent years, when the ultra-nationalist party of Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and the leftist Labour Party (İP) cooperated against further integration with the EU although the coalition government of the 57<sup>th</sup> Government with Democratic Left Party (DSP) and the Motherland Party (ANAP) on the one hand and the MHP on the other made progress towards the EU membership.

Turning back to the history again, for the Europeans Turkey was not ready for the transitional stage; and therefore they were trying to delay the passage to the second stage. But, they realized that if Turkey was left alone, this would make the economic and political situation even worse in Turkey. Therefore, they started negotiations of the Additional Protocol for the passage to the transitional stage of Turkey on March 1969. However, as it was the case right before the Ankara Agreement, Turkey experienced another military intervention on March 12, 1971. But, the new government after the intervention, i.e. the Nihat Erim Government, was in favour of the integration process with the EEC, and the Additional Protocol entered into force on January 1, 1973.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the first stage ended with the signing of the Additional Protocol. This document included the harmonization of economic policies, adoption of common external tariffs and it laid down the process of cumulative reduction of the commodities as a 12-year list and a 22-year list.

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<sup>13</sup> Hale, *op.cit.*, in note 2, p. 176.

<sup>14</sup> Erhan and Arat, *op.cit.*, in note 7, p. 840.

<sup>15</sup> Birand, *op.cit.*, in note 9, pp. 201-202.

<sup>16</sup> Hale, *op.cit.*, in note 2, p. 239.

<sup>17</sup> For the full text of the Additional Protocol please visit <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/adab/Document2.pdf>>

The second stage was problematic for Turkey in some respects. First of all, it brought some responsibilities to Turkey, and unstable governments of the time were not very successful in meeting these responsibilities. Also, the accession of the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Denmark in 1973 frustrated Turkey and reduced her motivation. Apart from these, Turkey failed to reduce her external tariffs due to the worldwide oil crises in 1973. For these reasons, Turkey had some difficulties and inefficiency in implementing the obligations arising from the Additional Protocol.

The third stage was the completion of a customs union between Turkey and the EEC member states. This was the ultimate goal set by the Ankara Agreement and the Additional Protocol. Within this period, the coordination of economic policies among the parties and also the adoption of the common external tariffs by Turkey in her trade with third countries were envisaged.

Ankara Agreement is very important in the sense that it forms the legal basis of the relations between Turkey and the EEC. It also marks the beginning of relations between them. Ankara Agreement is a *sui generis* international treaty. It is something less than admission, but more than a mere trade treaty.<sup>18</sup> Another important characteristic of the Ankara Agreement is that it was legally a mixed agreement, and it established three main bodies: the Association Council, the Association Committee, and the Joint Parliamentary Assembly. The Association Council is responsible for the implementation of the agreement and the others were designed according to the related provisions of the Ankara Agreement, and they are more advisory bodies in nature.<sup>19</sup>

The Association Council has been given the competence of decision-making for the attainment of the objectives set out in the Ankara Agreement.<sup>20</sup> Also, the Association Council has the jurisdiction over the conflicts between the parties: it can either solve the dispute or decide to send the case to the Court of Justice of the European Communities (CJEC). The Council meets under the presence of ministers of foreign affairs and it takes its decisions unanimously.

## FROM PROBLEMATIC 1970s TO APPLICATION FOR FULL MEMBERSHIP

Turning back to history again, the 1970s were problematic for the relations between Turkey and the EEC. After the Turkish military intervention in Cyprus in 1974, Greece applied for full membership to the EEC on June 12, 1975. The relations between the two sides deteriorated. Turkey was now in a very difficult

<sup>18</sup> Dominik Lasok, "The Ankara Agreement: Principles and Interpretation" in *Marmara Journal of European Studies*, vol. 1, No. 1-2, 1991, p.39.

<sup>19</sup> T.C. Başbakanlık Dış Ticaret Müsteşarlığı, *Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye*, Ankara, Doğuşum Matbaacılık Ltd. Şti., 2002, pp. 313-316.

<sup>20</sup> Article 22 of the Ankara Agreement. For the full text of the Ankara Agreement please visit <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/adc/mfa303.htm>>

situation, because she knew that in the Aegean Sea dispute and in the Cyprus problem there was the possibility of the Community's intervention for a solution between Greece and Turkey, which would be to the detriment of Turkey.<sup>21</sup> Turkey did not want to apply for full membership at first, because she was not successful in implementing the Ankara Agreement, and also she was economically not in very good condition. Therefore, the parallel policies of Greece and Turkey which had been the case since the 1950s diverged with this event and never be the same again.<sup>22</sup> In the end, Greece became the tenth member of the Community, whereas Turkey was on a "journey to an uncertain destination."<sup>23</sup>

Having these problems encountered, in 1978 Bülent Ecevit Government froze the terms of the Association Agreement. However, when the successor Demirel Government was trying to rebuild the relations and planning to apply for full membership, Turkey had another military intervention on September 12, 1980. The Community's reaction was not late to come after this coup d'état. When the National Security Council decided to dissolve all political parties on October 15, 1981 the European Commission -together with the Greek veto- decided to delay the Fourth Financial Protocol which included direct economic aid to Turkey. Furthermore, the European Parliament passed a resolution on January 22, 1982 suspending the Joint Parliamentary Committee, and the Association Council did not call for another meeting. When democracy was restored by the 1983 general elections and the 1894 local elections, the European Community regarded them as first steps towards the establishment of parliamentary democracy in Turkey. During this period, democracy and human rights became the main problematic issues between Turkey and the EEC. In the meantime, Greece became the member of the Community in January 1, 1981; and from that time Turkey faced an increasingly effective Greek lobby working against Turkey from within the Community. They vetoed, blocked the economic aid packages to Turkey.

During the second half of the 1980s, the circumstances changed and the economic reforms in Turkey had brought a major transformation in the economy. The liberal policies followed by Turgut Özal and also the pace of democratization in Turkey restored the relations which were deteriorated after the 1980 military intervention. In the light of the positive developments, Prime Minister Özal submitted a formal application for full membership on April 14, 1987. Özal based the application on the Article 237 of the EEC Treaty (Treaty of Rome), which gave any European country to do so; and after the application he said that Turkey was on the edge of a long, narrow, and a steep path.<sup>24</sup> What

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<sup>21</sup> Erhan and Arat, *op.cit.*, in note 7, p. 849

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>23</sup> Sevilay Elgün Kahraman, "Rethinking European Union Relations in the Light of Enlargement" in *Turkish Studies*, vol. 1, No. 1, 2000, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Birand, *op.cit.*, in note 9, p. 447.

he had in his mind was that Turkey had become a model to be emulated by other Middle Eastern countries; and according to him, this model should be supported by the West both politically and financially.<sup>25</sup> In the meantime, domestically for the first time there was a wide consensus among different economic and political interest groups in Turkey over the membership to the EC.<sup>26</sup>

The European Council forwarded Turkey's application to the European Commission for the preparation of an opinion, i.e. "avis." The Commission's opinion was completed on December 18, 1989 and endorsed by the Council on February 5, 1990. It basically underlined Turkey's eligibility for membership, but also pointed out the difficulties in an immediate full entry, stating that Turkish economy was still insufficiently developed to compete within the Community's emerging single market.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, Turkey's application was submitted at the least possible time, because the Community had just enlarged to the South, including Spain and Portugal on 1986, and also with the Single European Act, they were focused on deepening rather than enlargement. As put by Jacques Delors, the President of the EC Commission, on a meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Özal: "The 12, first of all, have to reach the aim of Single European Act. Their priority is to provide internal regulations among themselves. This is the precondition."<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the Commission suggested the reactivation of the Ankara Agreement. In accordance with this, on June 1990, the Commission presented the "Matutes Package," which contained measures on trade relations, economic and industrial cooperation, financial aid, and political dialogue.<sup>29</sup> However, this package was rejected by the EC Council due to the Greek veto, therefore a customs union, which was foreseen by the Ankara Agreement, was turned out to be the only mechanism to "rescue the relations."<sup>30</sup>

### FIRST ACHIEVEMENT: THE CUSTOMS UNION

In the meantime, the Gulf war and the dissolution of the Soviet Union increased Turkey's geopolitical position and it had positive implications on

<sup>25</sup> Eralp, *op.cit.*, in note 5, pp. 40-41.

<sup>26</sup> İhsan Duran Dağı, "Human Rights, Democratization and the European Community in Turkish Politics: The Özal Years, 1983-87" in *Middle Eastern Studies*, London, Frank Cass, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2001, p.25.

<sup>27</sup> T.C. Başbakanlık Dış Ticaret Müsteşarlığı, *op.cit.*, in note 17, pp. 341-343.

<sup>28</sup> Delors, Jacques cited in Birand, *op.cit.*, in note 9, p. 469 (translated from Turkish).

<sup>29</sup> Sanem Baykal, and Tuğrul Arat, "AB'yle İlişkiler" in Baskın Oran, [ed.] *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, cilt 2 İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2002, p. 327.

<sup>30</sup> Canan Balkır, "The Customs Union and Beyond" in Libby Rittenberg, [ed.], *The Political Economy of Turkey in the Post-Soviet Era: Going West and Looking East?*, London, Praeger, 1998, p. 56.



reshaping the Turkey-EC relations, and thus resulted in the revitalization of the Ankara Agreement.<sup>31</sup> Just as with Europe, the end of the Cold War created circumstances which required Turks to reconsider their country's core identity. The opening up of Turkic-speaking Central Asia and Azerbaijan as a consequence of the dissolution of the Soviet Union at first seemed to offer more than just new opportunities. It generated a vision of Turkey as the focal point of a new, dynamic, culturally integrated Turkic world. However, experiences showed that these high expectations were not met and Turkey totally turned her face to Western Europe.

Also, since the end of the Cold War, Turkey's major foreign policy objective turned out to be finding new strategies to guard against her possible isolation from the emerging economic and political institutions of Europe and to reassert her importance as a regional power.<sup>32</sup> Turkey's post-Cold War foreign policy towards its proximate regions has been generally multilateralist and constructive.

At the meeting of the Association Council on November 9, 1992 both sides both sides saw the Customs Union as the only realizable cooperation mechanism and then the 36<sup>th</sup> Turkey-EC Association Council on March 6, 1995 took the decision on the Customs Union, which was to enter into force on December 31, 1995. From that time onwards, Turkey turned out to be first country to conclude a Customs Union with the EC without being a full member. Therefore, Turkey was not in the decision-making process. Also, agriculture was not considered as the part of the Customs Union since Turkey did not take necessary measures in line with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In addition to it, free movement of labour, services, and capital were not included. In spite of these omissions, "the customs union decision made Turkey the nonmember country that institutionally is most strongly integrated with the EU" says Heinz Kramer.<sup>33</sup> If one looks at the economic indicators of trade between Turkey and the EU after the establishment of the Customs Union, it is obvious that in 1996 the imports from the EU rose by 34,7% compared to 1995, while Turkey's exports rose by 3,6%. The EU preserved its place as Turkey's biggest trading partner with a 52,9% share in imports and 49,5% in exports of Turkey.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Stefan Krauss, "The European Parliament in EU External Relations: The Customs Union with Turkey" in *European Foreign Affairs Review* 5, Kluwer Law International, 2000, p. 225.

<sup>32</sup> Eralp, *op.cit.*, in note 5, p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Heinz Kramer, *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States* Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2000, p. 190.

<sup>34</sup> Numbers are taken from the website of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The First Results of the Customs Union" part, < <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/adab/relations.htm>>

**Table 1.** Turkey's Export to and Imports from the EC

|                  | Exports (fob) to EC |            | Imports (fob) from EC |            |
|------------------|---------------------|------------|-----------------------|------------|
|                  | US \$ bil-lions     | % of Total | US \$ bil-lions       | % of Total |
| 1967-80(average) | 0,7                 | 48,5       | 1,3                   | 46,6       |
| 1980-84(average) | 1,9                 | 36,3       | 2,7                   | 29,8       |
| 1985-89(average) | 4,4                 | 44,5       | 5,2                   | 37,0       |
| 1990             | 6,9                 | 53,3       | 9,4                   | 41,9       |
| 1991             | 7,1                 | 51,8       | 9,2                   | 43,8       |
| 1992             | 7,6                 | 51,7       | 10,0                  | 43,9       |
| 1993             | 7,3                 | 47,5       | 13,0                  | 44,0       |
| 1994             | 8,3                 | 47,7       | 10,3                  | 47,0       |
| 1995             | 11,1                | 51,2       | 16,8                  | 47,2       |

Source: State Planning Organization, Turkey in Canan Balkır, "The Customs Union and Beyond" in Libby Rittenberg, [ed.], **The Political Economy of Turkey in the Post-Soviet Era: Going West and Looking East?** London, Praeger, 1998, p. 63.

However, in the meantime Turkish foreign policy met some problems at the first years of the Customs Union. First of all, one month after the beginning of the Customs Union, Greece and Turkey came to the brink of a war because of the sovereignty claims of both of them over the small islets called Imia-Kardak in the Aegean Sea. Apart from that, on August 1996, while a group of Greek Cypriots were trying to pass the Green line between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island, two Greek Cypriots died, and therefore these events escalated into conflict between Greece and Turkey. It was within this international environment that the EU Luxemburg Council was held in December 1997.

### FROM LUXEMBURG TO HELSINKI

Although the EU emphasized the economic part of the Community in the early stages of integration, Turkey has always given a special emphasis to the Union as a political issue. Apart from NATO, which was representing the security aspect of Turkish politics, Turkish membership to the EU was representing the political and economic aspects.<sup>35</sup> Turkey also attached particular importance to the EU's enlargement process. At the Association Council of April 29, 1997, the EU reconfirmed Turkey's eligibility for membership and asked the Commission to prepare recommendations to deepen

<sup>35</sup> "A Pallative Gathering in Rome," **Briefing** 1128, February 3, 1997, p. 4 in Kramer op.cit., in note 31, pp. 193-194.

Turkey-EU relations. However, the Commission excluded Turkey from the enlargement process in the report entitled “Agenda 2000: For a Stronger and Wider Union” on July 16, 1997. The report mentioned that the Customs Union was functioning smoothly, but it made no reference to Turkey’s full membership objective. Simultaneously with the Agenda 2000 report, the Commission proposed a “Communication” to enhance relations with Turkey. Also, the report tasked the Commission to prepare a Progress Report on Turkey’s eligibility for eventual EU membership, thereby recognizing by implication that Turkey was a candidate. This report was met by disappointment and frustration by Turkish side. However, the European Council of Luxemburg on December 13, 1997 decided not to include Turkey as a candidate state; but rather put her in a “category of its own as an applicant for whom a special ‘European strategy’ should be designed to bring about later membership.”<sup>36</sup>

This was against Turkish expectations and therefore they felt themselves to be put behind the other candidates rather than seeing themselves as been put in a special category of candidate. After this decision, many people in Turkey started to question Turkey’s EU ambition and they also thought that EU’s exclusion of Turkey was based on religious and cultural grounds; and also the EU was now perceived as a Christian Club by many Islamists, who claimed that Turkey as a Muslim country will never be accepted as a full member in that club.<sup>37</sup>

**Table 2.** Economic indicators of the EU candidates

| as of 1999     | Population (1000) | Unemployment | GDP (billion ₺) | GDP per capita (₺) | Export (million ₺) | Import (million ₺) | Inflation (%) | Growth rate (%) |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Bulgaria       | 8800              | 14,6         | 11,6            | 1400               | 3389               | 4371               | 0,4           | 2,4             |
| Czech Rep.     | 10287             | 9,5          | 49,8            | 4800               | 23408              | 24925              | 2,1           | -0,2            |
| Estonia        | 1437              | 11,7         | 4,8             | 3300               | 2893               | 4270               | 3,3           | -1,1            |
| Cyprus (Greek) | 855               | 3,4          | 8,5             | 12800              | 312                | 1132               | 1,4           | 4,5             |
| Latvia         | 2439              | 13,9         | 5,7             | 2400               | 1626               | 2780               | 2,4           | 0,1             |
| Lithuania      | 3700              | 14           | 10              | 2700               | 2787               | 4486               | 0,8           | -4,1            |
| Hungary        | 10043             | 7            | 45,4            | 4500               | 22312              | 24984              | 10,1          | 4,5             |
| Malta          | 379               | 5,5          | 3,4             | 8800               | 1907               | 2736               | 2,1           | 4,6             |
| Poland         | 38654             | 13           | 144,7           | 3700               | 21933              | 36756              | 7,3           | 4,1             |
| Romania        | 22456             | 6,2          | 31,9            | 1400               | 7586               | 9270               | 45,8          | -3,2            |
| Slovakia       | 5400              | 17,1         | 17,7            | 3300               | 9598               | 10637              | 10,6          | 1,9             |
| Slovenia       | 1988              | 7,7          | 18,7            | 9400               | 7582               | 8831               | 6,1           | 4,9             |
| Turkey         | 64818             | 7,3          | 173             | 2700               | 30562              | 46772              | 62,9          | -6,4            |

Source: Toplumsal Katılım ve Gelişim Vakfı, *Değişim ve Gelişim Sürecinde Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye*, İstanbul, 2003, p. 94

<sup>36</sup> Kramer, *op.cit.*, in note 31, pp. 195-196.

<sup>37</sup> Balkır, *op.cit.*, in note 28, p. 67.

Also, although the opening up of the Central and the Eastern European countries implied that a more diverse and open EU might eventually emerge after Luxemburg, there was the possibility that Turkey could be pushed back of the queue as the post-Cold War Europe redefined itself. Making things even worse for Turkey was the official recognition of Southern Cyprus as a candidate representing the whole island, including the Turkish Cypriots living in the northern part of the divided island. In short, Turkey's reaction to Luxemburg Summit was one of deep and genuine anger.<sup>38</sup> A thorough survey of the press archives clearly shows that Turkey repeatedly condemned Turkey's exclusion from the list of candidates as unjust and discriminatory, and Ankara suspended the political dialogue with Brussels. At the same time, many Turks - including the Motherland Party leader Mesut Yılmaz- began questioning whether pursuit of country's traditional European aspirations was worth the humiliation that it seemed to entail.<sup>39</sup>

The crisis due to Luxemburg Summit decision was disturbing many in Turkey and in Europe. Apart from them, as the transatlantic friend and ally of Turkey, Washington too expressed its unhappiness with the EU's treatment of this strategically important NATO member. However, it is noteworthy to note here that the majority of the EU states had not voted against Turkey at Luxemburg. This helped the Cardiff European Council Summit on June 15-16, 1998 to adopt the position that Community's Progress Report on Turkey was in effect a document for on preparation for Turkish accession, thereby the implication that Turkey was after all a candidate for membership. The prospects for an improvement in the situation also increased with the shift in a number of EU states from Christian to social democratic governments, most notably in Germany. In Germany, the Christian Democrats were defeated in the 1998 elections and they were replaced by the Social Democratic Party (SPD)-Green coalition under Gerhard Schroeder. With the reaffirmation of Turkey's commitment and determination, Germany used her presidency in the European Council to insert the Turkish question onto the agenda of the European Council's Cologne meeting in June 3-4, 1999. In October, the Commission issued a Progress Report on Turkey recommending that Turkey should be granted accession status, and in the same month the European Parliament also adopted a generally encouraging resolution on Turkey's accession.

Moreover, after the destructive earthquake in Turkey on August 1999, the Turkish-Greek relations entered into a relatively positive phase. Greek assistance to the rescue operations in the wake of the earthquake plus the change of media's approach to this issue contributed the improvement of relations between Ankara and Athens, the so called "earthquake diplomacy." Also, the personal friendship between Turkish Foreign Minister and his

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<sup>38</sup>Pia Christina Wood, "Europe and Turkey: A Relationship Under Fire", *Mediterranean Quarterly* 12(1), 1999, p. 103.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 110.

counterpart Georges Papandreou is worth mentioning, since this improved bilateral relations between Turkey and Greece.

Under the light of these developments did the Helsinki Summit of the European Council meet on December 10-11, 1999; and it produced a breakthrough in Turkey-EU relations. At Helsinki, Turkey was officially recognized without any precondition as a candidate state on equal footing with the other candidate countries. It is stated in the Helsinki Summit's conclusion that:

“The European Council welcomes recent positive developments in Turkey as noted in the Commission's progress report, as well as its intention to continue its reforms towards complying with the Copenhagen criteria. Turkey is a candidate State destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate States. Building on the existing European strategy, Turkey, like other candidate States, will benefit from a pre-accession strategy to stimulate and support its reforms...An accession partnership will be drawn up on the basis of previous European Council conclusions while containing priorities on which accession preparations must concentrate in the light of the political and economic criteria and the obligations of a Member State, combined with a national programme for the adoption of the *acquis*.”<sup>40</sup>

The change in the attitude of the EU towards Turkey is due to some reasons. First of all, the EU wanted to halt the deterioration of relations and frustration of Turkey which emanated especially after the Luxemburg Summit. Secondly, the new social democrat (SPD) and the Green coalition government in Germany worked hard for Turkey's acceptance as a candidate; thirdly, the change in the Greek attitude towards Turkey; and finally the pressure from the US.<sup>41</sup> Washington seemed to play an active role in smoothing relations.

Especially after the Cold War, the importance of Turkey to the United States did not decline, and conversely it increased with the break up of the Gulf War in the neighbouring region of Turkey. This shows that the strategic importance of Turkey to the US during the Cold War continued and security remained the main rubric of relations that was keeping these historical friend and allies together. However, it is not the same case from the EU perspective while military strategic considerations have become less important in Europe's

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<sup>40</sup> Helsinki European Council (December 10-11, 1999), *Presidency Conclusion*, retrieved from <[http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/ACFA4C.htm](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/ACFA4C.htm)>

<sup>41</sup> F.Stephen Larrabee, and Ian O. Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in Age of Uncertainty*, Rand Corporation, 2003, p.52.

approach to Turkey<sup>42</sup> However, economic, political, and cultural factors have increased in importance in Turkey-EU relations. It is normal to have this change in attitude since Turkey as the immediate neighbour and the prospective member of the EU has to increase the economic and political situation in itself. Today, Europe's ultimate goal is not to deter a Soviet threat, but to create an economic and political entity and pursuing a common European foreign and defense policy.<sup>43</sup> However, for the US, Turkey has always been seen as a stepping stone to the region with her geostrategic position. This shows us the difference of the European and American's perspectives of the events, which has been the case for many decades.

As for the US support on Turkey's efforts towards the EU, President Bill Clinton of the US exhausted the European politicians for Turkey's status in the EU. For instance, right after the Helsinki Summit Clinton said that "[t]he United States has long supported Turkey's bid to join the EU in the belief that this would have lasting benefits not only for Turkey but also for all EU members, and the United States. On Friday the EU and Turkey took a big step towards bringing that goal to fruition."<sup>44</sup>

### POST-HELSINKI PERIOD AND REFORMS IN TURKEY

The recognition of Turkey as a candidate country in Helsinki changed the Turkish attitude towards the EU and it opened a new era in the relations between Turkey and the EU. Right after the Helsinki Summit, the European Commission started to prepare an Accession Partnership document for Turkey, and it was adopted on March 8, 2001.<sup>45</sup> This document highlights the priorities and intermediate objectives of Turkey for adopting the *acquis* and getting Turkey ready to the future membership. It set out short term and medium term goals for each *acquis* chapter that are to be reached by Turkey. Also, it was designed to be revised and updated every year according to the developments encountered by Turkey, especially on the short term objectives which are normally for the period less than one year. In short, it turned out to be a roadmap for Turkish accession to the EU.

After the approval of the Accession partnership by the EU, the Turkish Government prepared and announced her own "National Program for the

<sup>42</sup> Fulya Kip-Barnard, "Soğuk Savaş ve Sonrasında Türkiye-AB İlişkileri" in Cem Karadeli, [ed.], *Soğuk Savaş Sonrasında Avrupa ve Türkiye*, Ankara, Ayraç Yayınevi, 2003, p. 236.

<sup>43</sup> Larrabee and Lesser, *op.cit.*, in note 39, p. 47.

<sup>44</sup> Bill Clinton, (December 15, 1999) quoted in article "Clinton Welcomes Turkey's Acceptance of EU's Offer" in Turkish Daily News, < [http://www.turkishdailynews.com/old\\_editions/12\\_15\\_99/for.htm#f5](http://www.turkishdailynews.com/old_editions/12_15_99/for.htm#f5)>

<sup>45</sup> For full text of the Accession Partnership document please visit <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/ad/Accession.partnership.pdf>>

Adoption of the EU Acquis” on March 19, 2001.<sup>46</sup> The National Program was prepared in line with the objectives that are highlighted by the EU in the Accession Partnership document. It set out Turkey’s capabilities and the necessary measures to be taken by Turkish Government. By doing so, Turkey showed her will for EU membership and speeded up the reform process which had already started, but had been very slow. Both the Accession Partnership and the National Program focused on the political criteria where Turkey had to observe democracy, rule of law, individual rights and freedoms, and legal and administrative measures, i.e. amendments and legislation, necessary to undertake these tasks. Apart from them, all the chapters of the *acquis* were covered in the National Program, so that Turkey can meet the Copenhagen criteria. From that time on, a comprehensive reform process started in Turkey to fulfill the EU’s Copenhagen political criteria, which is a precondition to start accession negotiations with the EU.

Following these important developments, the Turkey-EU Association Council began to meet regularly. The Association Council met three times in Luxemburg on April 11, 2000; June 26, 2001; and April 16, 2002 respectively. In the meeting in 2000, 8 sub-committees were established to carry out an analytical examination of the level of harmonization of the Turkish legislation with the *acquis communautaire*. In the same line with the reform process, as mentioned in the National Program, Turkey started to take important steps towards the accession negotiations. One of the earliest and most important among these reforms is the major review of the Constitution of Turkey in October 3, 2001. This amendment was such a big one that nearly one-fifth of the 177 articles of the Constitution were changed. This package of constitutional amendment covered a wide range of issues, such as improving human rights, strengthening the rule of law and restructuring of democratic institutions. Also, this amendment was complemented by the necessary legal and administrative measures to ensure their implementation.

From the acceptance of Turkey as a candidate in Helsinki to present, seven major harmonization packages were prepared and entered into force. These packages included major amendments to the legal system of Turkey, which improved the situation in Turkey as it was hard to envisage just a decade ago. The first legislative package was adopted in February 2002 and it amended various legislations in the Penal Code, the Anti-terror law, which was often criticized as being the legal basis for the detention and sentencing of many intellectuals for expressing their views. The second legislative package of April 2002 extended the scope of the freedom of thought and expression, the freedom of the press, and the freedom of association. It also reinforced the necessary measures for the prevention of torture and ill-treatment. The third legislative

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<sup>46</sup> For full text of the National Program please visit <<http://www.abgs.gov.tr>>; also see Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Secretariat General for EU Affairs **National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis**, Ankara: Ankara University Basimevi, 2001.

package entered into force in August 2002, which was a major breakthrough in Turkish history. The package included the abolition of the death penalty, abolition of lifting legal restrictions on individual cultural rights, making retrial possible in the light of the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, and easing restrictions on the right to association. The European Commission welcomed the adoption of these reforms as an important signal of the determination of Turkey towards further alignment to the values and standards of the EU. Commissioner responsible for enlargement, Günther Verheugen said that:

“I welcome the courageous decision of the Turkish Parliament. This decision would not have been possible without a clear European perspective that the EU has developed for Turkey since the European Council of Helsinki in 1999...Our position starts paying off. Not to give in on these issues makes our partners better understand why we so strongly defend our values and that they are precious for us. As regards the abolition of death penalty, no doubt, Turkey is now on our side.”<sup>47</sup>

In domestic politics, general elections were held in Turkey on November 3, 2002. Dissatisfied with the existing political parties, Turkish people expressed their desire on a new government, i.e. the Justice and Development Party (AKP) headed by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Dramatically, none of the parties in the previous Parliament were able to pass the national threshold, including the ones which passed the reformist third legislative package, namely the Democratic Left Party (DSP), Nationalist Action Party (MHP), and the Motherland Party (ANAP). The new AKP government expressed its commitment to reform very clearly and quickly, and declared the fulfillment of the EU's Copenhagen criteria to pave the way for the opening of the accession negotiations with the EU. Interestingly, the main opposition party, i.e. the People's Republican Party (CHP), supported the Government's commitment to reform. Right after the elections, the Copenhagen Summit of the EU in December 12-13, 2002 decided that ten candidate countries would be members to the EU as of May 1, 2004; but postponed the decision to open the accession negotiations with Turkey until the EU Summit to be held in December of this year stating that:

“[t]he Union encourages Turkey to pursue energetically its reform process. If the European Council in December 2004, on the basis of a report and a recommendation from the Commission, decides that Turkey fulfils the

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<sup>47</sup>Günther Verheugen, quoted in Pinar Tanlak, , “Turkey EU Relations in the post Helsinki Phase and the EU Harmonisation Laws Adopted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly”, *SEI Working Paper*, 2002, pp. 13-14.



Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay.”<sup>48</sup>

The last two words of the above quoted conclusion were put after strong efforts by the Turkish diplomats since the EC/EU has always postponed the case of Turkey. Also, here it seems that the EU wanted to have some time for seeing the policies of the newly formed government. As opposed to the expectations, the AKP Government however, turned out to be more reformist than the other Turkish governments; and this was reflected in their policies.

The fourth harmonization package, which entered into force on January 11, 2003, brought significant changes to the freedom of association, deterrence against torture and mistreatment; and also it amended the Penal Code, the Law on State Security Courts, the Press Law, the Law on Political Parties, the Law on the Use of the Right of Petition. One month after this package, on February 4, 2003 the fifth harmonization package entered into force which included provisions on retrial and on the freedom of association. The sixth harmonization package entered into force on July 19, 2003 and it introduced significant legal changes expanding the freedom of expression, religious freedom, and right to life and retrial. Finally, the seventh harmonization package, which entered into force on August 7, 2003, brought the expansion of freedom expression, cultural rights, civilian-military relations, the rights of children, and the functionality of the executive.

The impact of the harmonization packages on Turkey has been revolutionary. The first and immediate difference has been the start of an open debate on sensitive issues such as the death penalty, cultural rights and the civilian-military relations. These packages changed the existing legislation to improve human rights and other freedoms. As put by Fabrizio Barbaso, the reforms in Turkey and the pace of change are “more often, more self-confident, and more self-critical.”<sup>49</sup> In order to assess the effectivity of the harmonization packages and also to implement them properly, in September 2003, the Government set up a “Reform Monitoring Group.” The Group is composed of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Justice, and the Minister of Interior plus high ranking bureaucrats. It is currently be headed by Abdullah Gül, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The group assesses the steps taken so far regarding the implementation and discusses specific issues requiring further attention and to ensure coordination for rapid and effective implementation.

The Government recently has amended the Constitution on May 22, 2004 which turned out to be a landmark in itself. It amended nine articles of the Constitution and abolished one article. This was the ninth amendment to the

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<sup>48</sup>Copenhagen European Council, December 12-13, 2002, **Presidency Conclusion**, retrieved from <[http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/73842.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/73842.pdf)>

<sup>49</sup> Fabrizio Barbaso, Keynote Panel: “EU-Turkey Relations” in **Third METU Conference on International Relations**, May 25, 2004.

1982 Constitution within its short life of two decades. Among these amendments are the deletion of the “death penalty” clause in relevant provisions, promotion of gender equality, providing the supremacy of the international treaties over the national law in cases of conflict, abolition of State Security Courts, the ending of the military representative in the “Higher Education Council”, and the civilian control of the Court of Audits over the military expenditures.

Apart from these legal measures taken, politically Turkey encountered a great development in recent years. On the sensitive Kurdish issue, the situation changed a lot. Especially after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan on February 16, 1999 Turkey left her obsession with secessionism and a positive dialogue was opened between the Kurds and the state. The reforms granted ethnic groups - including the Kurds- the right to broadcast and teaching their languages. Another major change allows television and radio broadcasts in languages other than Turkish, which started to be performed very recently. This positive approach of the state towards every citizen has showed that the previous obsessions are faded away. Also, the improvement of this situation is welcomed by the Europeans, who were always accused of by intervening the domestic affairs of Turkey on the Kurdish issue.

Although the solution to the Cyprus problem was not a precondition for membership, this issue was brought before Turkish officials at every instance and had turned out to be an unofficial compulsory precondition. The situation also got even worse with the inclusion of the Southern Cyprus in the enlargement process. This would be problematic for Turkey and would cause a Greek Cyprus veto to Turkish membership in the EU or they would demand certain concessions regarding the Cyprus problem as a condition for lifting its veto. However, with the initiative of the Turkish Government, the previously disputed Kofi Annan’s plan for a settlement of the Cyprus problem was reactivated at the beginning of the year 2004, and a final draft was to be reached. However, the Greek Cypriots -who were always claiming that the Turks were against a solution and were blocking the solution- voted against the Annan Plan with a 75% “no” on a referendum which was held simultaneously in two parts of the island on April 24, 2004. Thus, the Greek Cypriots, who pretend to be demanding solution, turned out to be against a solution. After the Greek Cypriots’ strong “no” to the Annan Plan, it is also claimed that if the treaty establishing the Republic of Cyprus in 1960, i.e. Treaty of Guarantee, was to be put on a referendum, it would also be rejected by the Greek Cypriots; but this will remain a historical question which will never be answered.<sup>50</sup>

As mentioned before, Turkey saw the EU as a political matter rather than economic. Therefore, the security aspect of the Union has received great

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<sup>50</sup> Fehmi Gürdallı, April 26, 2004, “Referandum Sonucunun Sonuçları” in NTVMSNBC website, retrieved from <<http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/news/267449.asp>>

importance from Turkey. The development of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) within the EU or the European Security and Defense Identity within NATO has become an integral part of the EU's deepening process. As a non-EU member, Turkey has feared that she could be excluded from the security aspect of the EU within NATO. Turkey's basic expectation from the EU is the adoption of the necessary measures to include the participation of non-European allies, i.e. Turkey, in the EU led operations if this is to happen within the NATO framework.<sup>51</sup> Turkey, as having a strategic location and having great military capabilities in the region has a big potential on the tackling of the risks in the region, and cannot be underestimated by the EU. Therefore, Turkey's incorporation to the EU is important for EU's security role.<sup>52</sup>

As for Islam and cultural differences, Turkey will put diversity to the Union basing on the premises that which they claim "unity in diversity." Especially after the September 11 attacks, the "clash of civilizations" rhetoric became popular, and this was deduced to clash of religions between Islam and the other religions. Turkey's membership will contribute to the establishment of the bridge between Islam and the West. It will also prove that cultural and religious differences can coexist and that Islam and modernity can be compatible, making the terrorists to lose their justifications basing on religion. Also, Turkey -as the reconciliatory state between the Muslim and European societies in the Mediterranean region- has been experiencing the Islam and the European identity for centuries; thereby making Turkey a bridge between these two cultures.

## CONCLUSION

Turkey, since the proclamation of the Republic in 1923 has tried to be considered as a European country. The last forty years of it has been a more significant Western policy after the signing of the Ankara Agreement with the EC. Europe, together with Turkey has been in this policy objective and they have seen all the experiences Turkey had, such as the coup d'états. Turkey, since the beginning of the relations, has always claimed to be considered as a special country for Europe not only due to her geostrategic situation, but also due to the differences from the whole Community. However, Europe, instead of just refusing this claim sometimes used this rhetoric in order to keep Turkey more in the waiting room. The instable governments in Turkey on the other hand, instead of having long-term objectives, were always in search of small successes, which would keep them a few more years in power.

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<sup>51</sup> Onur Öymen, "Turkey and the New Challenges to European Security" in *European Foreign Affairs Review* 6 Kluwer Law International, 2001, p. 404.

<sup>52</sup> Meltem Müftüleri-Baç, "Turkey's Role in the EU's Security and Foreign Policies" in *Security Dialogue* vol. 31(4) (SAGE Publications), 2000, p. 499.

However, in recent years the success of Turkey on the reform packages turned the fate of Turkey-EU relations which would not even endure some more problems and delays. Europeans used to blame Turkey for not being willing to reforms and accused the politicians of protecting the status quo. The active party of the relations was Europe, who always made Turkey do something. Nowadays, the results of these accusations are seen as the reform packages and legislations. So, now it can be said that Europe acted as a catalyst in Turkey and Turkey is currently the active party of the relations, and waiting the EU to decide on the beginning of the accession negotiations. Moreover, it should also be kept in mind that making and implementing reforms in domestic politics necessitates a popular support and a political will of the governments. Had the current government lacked political will and popular support, their performance would be different than now. Therefore, change in Turkish domestic politics together with the positive signals from the EU opened a new era in Turkey-EU relations. The situation in Turkey is getting better by every reform, and each of them are met with satisfaction both from the Turkish citizens and the EU.

On the other hand, developments within the EU will also be important. A slowdown in the pace of European integration will negatively affect Turkey-EU relations and diminish her chance for potential membership in the long run. Unfortunately, it seems that this could happen since the support for EU enlargement has been declining, as the costs of enlargement are increasing. Especially after the recent enlargement on May 1, 2004 the EU will need some time to digest the enlargement, whereas Turkey seems ready for starting accession negotiations. Therefore, the EU will show its sincerity in December 2004 by deciding whether to start accession negotiation “without delay” or not. As put by Hüseyin Bağcı, “Turkey is ready for Europe, is Europe ready for Turkey?”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Hüseyin Bağcı, quoted in Matthews, Owen “Ready for Europe, or No?” in *Newsweek International*, Atlantic Edition, May 3, 2004.