



Turkey as an EU candidate country

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In 1987, Turkey applied for full membership to the European Union (EU), yet the European-Turkish relations have been tested in a number of ways. Turkey's EU candidacy has caused contradicting points of view, including the future of the European Union. The negotiation process includes the harmonization of the Turkish law with the European law – this is one of the most challenging parts. In 2006, from the 35 subject areas of law (chapters), 8 chapters could not be opened and no chapters can be provisionally closed if Turkey will not apply the 'Additional Protocol to the Ankara Association Agreement' to Cyprus.¹

The EU enlargement

According to the European Parliament Director General for external policies of the Union and Policy analyst for the Western Balkans and Turkey, André De Munter, "The EU's enlargement policy aims to unite European countries in a common political and economic project. Guided by the Union's values and subject to strict conditions, enlargement has proved to be one of the most successful tools in promoting political, economic and societal reforms, and in consolidating peace, stability and democracy across the continent. Enlargement policy also enhances the EU's presence on the global stage."²

In other words, there is a legal framework (conditions) to be followed by any European state in order to become a member of the EU. On the Treaty of Lisbon- the Treaty of the EU, Article 49 explains which states are eligible to apply and on Article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union, the EU's founding values are presented.³

During the EU's integration process, it is necessary of any candidate or potential candidate country to following the Copenhagen criteria (1993), including:

- the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- a functioning market economy and the ability to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU;

- the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including by adhering to the aims of political, economic and monetary union, and adopting the common rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law (the *acquis communautaire*).⁴

The European Council also approved the “renewed consensus on enlargement’ (2006), which was based not only, on ‘consolidation, conditionality and communication’, but also on the EU’s capacity to integrate new members; the Treaty of Lisbon was adopted, to change the composition and work of the most important EU institutions, so that the enlargement would not affect EU policymaking.”⁵

Regarding the process towards joining the EU, a country applies first to the Council and then, the Council asks the opinion of the Commission about it. It must be noted that the European Parliament is informed about this certain application. Depending on the Commission’s opinion, the European Council has the opportunity to decide by unanimity, whether to grant the candidate status to the applicant country. The Commission gives a recommendation and then the Council unanimously decides about opening the negotiations or not.⁶

The EU legislation includes over 30 policy chapters. More specifically, the EU Acquis, which is 130,000 pages, consists of 35 chapters, including “the content, principles and political objectives of the Treaties on which the Union is founded; legislation and decisions adopted pursuant to the Treaties, and the case law of the Court of Justice; other acts, legally binding or not, adopted within the Union framework [...] and other acts within the framework of the common foreign and security policy [...], of justice and home affairs; international agreements concluded by the Communities, the Communities jointly with their Member States, the Union, and those concluded by the Member States among themselves with regard to Union activities;” the EU Acquis is constantly developing as new rules and regulations are integrated.⁷

Prior to the beginning of the negotiations, the Commission provides a so-called “screening” report chapter by chapter. The “screening process,” which “is the preparatory stage of accession negotiations [...], forms the basis for the bilateral negotiations between the European Union and the various candidate countries, [...] allowing the latter to familiarize themselves with EU law and demonstrate their capacity to put it into effect [...]” and helps “...to identify those areas of EU law in which progress is needed if the candidate countries’ legislation is to be compatible with EU rules. These areas are divided into chapters, which are negotiated individually,” whereas, “A further screening exercise may be carried out during the accession negotiations if EU law has been updated”⁸

Based on the Commission’s recommendation, the Council agrees unanimously whether it should open each new negotiation chapter. If progress is considered

satisfactory, the Commission can recommend 'provisionally closing' a chapter and decide unanimously. As soon as negotiations on all the policy chapters are finished, the terms and conditions - safeguard clauses and transitional arrangements may also be included – are included into an accession treaty between the EU Member States and the candidate state. Only if the Parliament agrees and the Council approves by unanimity, the accession treaty can be signed; it is then submitted by all contracting states for ratification, according to their constitutional requirements (for instance ratification by parliament or referendum).⁹

According to the Article 49 of the Treaty of the EU, the role of the European Parliament is important on the financial sides of accession, as, according to the Treaty of Lisbon, the Parliament's opinion is necessary for implementing the multiannual financial framework (MFF). Its budgetary powers influence directly "the amounts allocated to the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)."¹⁰

The European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs assigns "standing rapporteurs for all candidate and potential candidate countries," exchanges regularly points of view with the Commissioner responsible for enlargement negotiations, high-level government officials, civil society representatives, and experts. The European Parliament presents its positions on the annual resolutions, as an answer to the Commission's latest annual 'country reports'. The European Parliaments resolutions on the EU's enlargement strategy determine the policy. Regular bilateral relations are kept between the European Parliament and the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries through the Parliament's delegations; these are discussed with their counterparts' issues, which are related to the EU accession process.¹¹

The Case of Turkey

Two years after the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC), in 1959, Turkey was one of the first countries striving for co-operation with EEC. Soon after, on September 12, 1963, the "Agreement Creating An Association Between the Republic of Turkey and the European Economic Community," known as the "Ankara Agreement," was signed, which, as it was mentioning, aimed "to ensure a continuous improvement in living conditions in Turkey and in the European Economic Community through accelerated economic progress and the harmonious expansion of trade, and to reduce the disparity between the Turkish economy and the economies of the Member States of the Community;" the Agreement also included a Customs Union (CU), so as Turkey to be in the position to freely trade goods and agricultural products with countries within the EEC.¹²

Turkey's full membership application was submitted to the European Council on April 14, 1987. The negotiations began in 1993, whereas in 1996, the Customs Union

between the EU and Turkey was created. In 1999, the country was granted the candidate status at the Helsinki Summit. To be noted that in 1999, with the US encouragement,¹³ Greece and Turkey a discussion was initiated on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) on the occasion of high significance political issues; as a result, the Greek government approved Turkey's path to Europe. The European Council in Helsinki declared that the political solution of the Cyprus Issue will facilitate the Cyprus accession to the EU in 2004, without, however, this to be a precondition.¹⁴

The EU-Turkey Accession Partnership was adopted by the EU Council on March 8, 2000. This was actually a plan for Turkey on how to join the EU. Eleven days later, the "National Program for the Adoption of the Acquis" (NPAA), namely the EU law, was adopted by the Turkish government. In September 2001, during the Copenhagen Summit, the EU Council approved the increase of the EU financial support ("pre-accession instrument."¹⁵)

In 2005, negotiations were opened. During the screening process, out of the 35 chapters, 16 were opened to negotiations and only one chapter ("25-Science and Research") had been provisionally closed. In December 11, 2006, "The negotiations on 8 chapters cannot be opened ("1-Free Movement of Goods," "3-Right of Establishment and Freedom to Provide Services," "9-Financial Services," "11-Agriculture and Rural Development," "13-Fisheries," "14-Transport Policy," "29-Customs Union" and "30-External Relations") as a result of the EU Council decision of December 2006 and no chapters can be provisionally closed on the grounds that Turkey does not undertake its obligations stemming from the Additional Protocol to Ankara Agreement in its entirety"¹⁶ and therefore, "until Turkey applies the 'Additional Protocol to the Ankara Association Agreement' to Cyprus." ¹⁷

On May 17, 2012, the "Positive Agenda" was launched with Turkey by the European Commission to revive their relations. "Positive Agenda should bring fresh dynamics and new momentum into our relations," explained EU's Enlargement Commissioner, Stefan Fule, at a joint press conference with Turkey's EU Minister Egemen Bagis in Ankara. "Our aim is to keep the accession process alive and put it properly back on track after a period of stagnation which has been a source of frustration for both sides," he added, stressing that the Agenda "was not to replace, but to complement and support Turkey's accession process." The EU's Enlargement Commissioner also "listed these areas as alignment with EU legislation, political reforms and fundamental rights, visa, mobility and migration, trade, energy, counter-terrorism and dialogue on foreign policy" and stressed that "the task of the working groups created within the scope of Positive Agenda would be to accelerate the process of alignment of Turkey with EU policies and standards under eight chapters" and "that the Positive Agenda aimed at bringing back credibility to Turkey's EU accession process."¹⁸

The EU Commission's Enlargement Strategy Paper referred to the proposal of creating a "Positive Agenda" in Turkish-EU relations and mentioned, as the key elements of this agenda "intensified dialogue and cooperation in political reforms, visa, mobility and migration, energy, fight against terrorism, more Turkish participation in the Community programs, sister cities, trade and the Customs Union and support for efforts to comply with the *acquis*" and predicted informal talks between the Commission and Turkey on the eight blocked chapters.¹⁹

The Working Groups meetings seemed to have a positive outcome, as Turkey met four closing standards in the "Company Law," "Consumer and Health Protection" and "Financial Control" chapters. Thus, the developments on Turkish membership were crucial later on; a new negotiating chapter focusing on regional policy and coordinating structural instruments was opened in 2013 and in 2015, a chapter on economic and monetary policy was opened on December 14 following the EU-Turkey meeting of November 29.²⁰

2016 seemed to also be a crucial year for EU-Turkey relations; on March 18, a mutual action plan to stop the movement of irregular migrants to EU and reactivation of Turkey's membership procedure were reconfirmed, as well as the acceleration of the visa liberalization process was agreed. On June 30, an additional negotiating chapter, which was focused on financial and budgetary provisions, was opened. However, in July, due to the "attempted coup" in Turkey, the European Parliament adopted a resolution (November), calling for freezing temporarily the ongoing negotiations with Turkey's membership.²¹

After the leaders' discussion at the EU Council, in October 2017, the College discussed Turkey's pre-accession support. The Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, outlined the current pre-accession support, and what should be done next. The European Commission will show alternatives "on the adaptation of the indicative financial allocations for Turkey for the years 2018-2020." These will be shown to the General Affairs Council (GAC) in December 2017, so as a political decision to be taken. Until then, following the Presidency conclusions of the previous year's GAC (December 2016). The Commission was currently aimed at ongoing pre-accession funding on important areas such as fundamental rights, the rule of law, civil society, and people-to-people contacts. These areas would be preserved in future support programs.²²

On November 30, 2017, "the Council and the European Parliament separately approved the deal reached on 18 November 2017 in the conciliation committee on the 2018 budget," namely the EU budget for year 2018 is adopted; taken into account the situation in Turkey, regarding democracy, human rights, press freedom, and rule of law, "its pre-accession funds have been cut by €105 million compared to the Commission's

initial proposal, with a further €70 million held in reserve until the country makes “measurable sufficient improvements” in these fields.”²³

Issues Regarding Turkey’s EU membership

Turkey’s EU candidacy has caused contradicting points of view, regarding the future of the European Union itself. Turkey’s population is large. It is estimated that by year 2020, Turkey will have the largest population within the EU (87 million inhabitants). This means that Turkey would play a leading role within the EU, as it would elect the largest number of members of the European Parliament. It is expected, that the Turkish accession would cost 11.3 billion per year on farming subsidies.²⁴

On financial terms, according to a research analysis on Turkey’s economy by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom published on 2014, Turkey is the fastest emerging market in Europe and OECD. Its GDP per capita is larger than that of both Bulgaria and Romania combined. Other facts on the same report show that Turkey has the highest number of youth population, the fourth largest labor force in comparison to 27 European countries and that according to HSBC’s “The World in 2050” report, Turkey is expected to be the world’s twelfth and Europe’s fifth largest economy until 2050. Moreover, Turkey has been in the Customs Union since 1995 and has free trade agreements and negotiations with many other countries.²⁵

All the data show that the balance of the trade within the countries of the European Union by Turkey’s accession might lead to instability. Thus, the opponents of Turkey’s EU accession question whether Turkey can really be a part of the EU because the conditions during the time Turkey applied were different to today; the Eurozone crisis has led the EU to have a more federal approach to law, politics and fiscal matters and stress that the political union of Europe will be threatened because of Turkey’s EU membership, whereas those who support Turkey’s membership are also supporters of the free trade.

Supporters of Turkey’s EU accession believe that Turkey’s geographical position will increase Europe’s role at international level; through Turkey, Europe will extend to regions with key natural resources and will increase its Common Foreign and Security Policy. The fact that Turkey is NATO’s second largest military force is also a contributing factor to this (The United States of America have the first largest military force in NATO).

It must be noted that according to Yalcin Topcu, who is the adviser of Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey needs to reexamine its NATO membership and withdraw about 40 troops from the organization in Norway, after he found out that Turkey’s founder, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, and President Erdogan were described as “enemies” at a stand with “enemies” portraits during NATO’s “Trident Javelin” exercise

on November 8-17, 2017 in Norway. NATO's Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg, and Norway's Defense Minister, Frank Bakke-Jensen, apologized to Turkey over the incident (Mail Online, 2017), which Turkish officials have described as one of the “greatest scandals” in the alliance's history.²⁶

One of the most crucial issues of Turkey's EU candidacy is the religion. Turkey is a secular state, namely it has not an official religion, yet it will be the first Muslim country to join the EU, since most of its citizens are Muslims. *The Economist* has noted that, “In fact, Turkey is far from secular, if that implies an arm's-length relationship between faith and politics as the chief imam is a civil servant and the head of the Religious Affairs Directorate, which is the top religious authority in Turkey.”²⁷ Despite the fact that Turkey officially recognizes the freedom of religion, the question is whether all minorities have been equally treated in Turkey. The German pastor J Lepsius said on January 31, 1917, that the expulsion of the Greeks and the Armenians was a program of two phases – the extinction of the Christian elements in Turkey.²⁸ Taken into account that Europe is mainly Christian and has a different culture from Turkey, the question remains on what the future of Europe will be if Turkey joins the EU.

Turkey's Armenian Genocide recognition was an issue of discussion on whether this should be a condition for Turkey to join the European Union. More than twenty countries, including Argentina, Belgium, Canada, France, Italy, Russia, as well as Pope Francis, the European Parliament and the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, have all officially recognized Armenian genocide. Other countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Israel are using another terminology to define what genocide is. Turkey reacted, refused to recognize the Armenian genocide and did not accept such as precondition to enter the EU. In 2006, the EU Parliament voted against a proposal to include the Armenian genocide recognition as a criterion for Turkey's EU membership and in 2011, it did not approve a similar proposal by Greeks and Greek-Cypriots.

Human rights, women's rights, and the freedom of press are just some of the issues that Turkey faces as a candidate country. It has been estimated that in the aftermath of the coup the attempted coup against Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, more than 50,000 people have been jailed pending trial and some 150,000 have been sacked or suspended from their jobs in the military, public and private sector.²⁹

According to the Human Rights Watch, the restrictions that followed were “symptomatic of the government's increasing authoritarianism....Under the state of emergency, the president presides over the cabinet, which can pass decrees without parliamentary scrutiny or possibility of appeal to the constitutional court;” Decrees passed include measures that conflict with basic human rights safeguards, such as

dismissal from public service without an investigation, confiscation of property without judicial review, police custody of up to thirty days, reintroduction of incommunicado detention, namely detainees can be denied access to a lawyer in the first five days of custody, increasing risks of ill-treatment, and Turkey's obligations under international and domestic law."³⁰

The Human Rights Watch highlights that "Turkey temporarily derogated from [...] many of the protections in the European Convention on Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, although it is prohibited from derogating from core obligations, including the absolute prohibition on torture or ill-treatment of detainees [...], such as beating and stripping detainees, use of prolonged stress positions, and threats of rape, as well as threats to lawyers and interference with medical examinations."³¹

For instance, on November 16, 2017, Turkey announced that it would reduce to the minimum required to retain membership in the Council of Europe human rights body, because the Council awarded the imprisoned Turkish judge, Murat Arslan, with the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize. Ankara accuses judge Arslan for having links to 2016 "coup" attempt and US-based cleric Fethullah Gulen. Judge Arslan explained in his message that human rights are being systematically violated in Turkey, "I am addressing you from a prison in a country where the law is put in brackets, where the values of democracy are gradually moving away, where dissident voices are silenced, where the defenders of law, journalists, (and) those who wish for peace are declared terrorists."³²

Similarly, according to Human Rights Watch, the Turkish government has attempted to "silence" media criticism and has scrutiny government policy in Turkey in many ways, including canceling press accreditation of critical journalists, threatening, physical attacking, prosecuting, and jailing them, seizing or closing down media companies, such as *Zaman* newspaper, and blocking news websites critical to the government and has been the only country to have "made the highest number of requests to Twitter of any country to censor individual accounts."³³

Until 2008, the Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, it was a crime to insult "Turkishness," the republic and specific government bodies. However, after the awarded author, Orhan Pamuk and the journalist, Hrant Dink, had referred on their works on the Turkey's Armenians genocide, were among those who were "persecuted under this provision" for offending "Turkishness." Dink was murdered in 2007. The European Human Rights Court characterized this "violation of the basic freedom of expression" and "condemned the Turkish government for its involvement in the death of Hrant Dink." In order to align Turkish law with the EU principles in relation to freedom of the press and expression, Turkey replaced the terms "Turkishness" and "republic" with "Turkish nation" and "Republic of Turkey."³⁴

Likewise, in 2016, more than 1,000 university professors signed a petition criticizing Turkey's government policy in the Southeast and supported political negotiations with the PKK and were "subjected to a criminal investigation for "insulting" the Turkish state;" this resulted to the dismissal of certain academics-signatories. International pressure, along with the United Nations Secretary General, contributed to the release of journalists from unjustified detention. It must be highlighted that Turkey became "a world leader" in imprisoning journalists, because of the high number of journalists in pretrial imprisonment due to their writing.³⁵

Regarding Women's rights, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended – amongst others – to the government to address gender inequality and support women's and girls' access to education, employment, reproductive health, and justice, with an emphasis on the difficulties faced by women and girl refugees, asylum seekers and Kurdish women, as well as on guaranteeing full access in public hospitals to authorized abortion. The Turkish government has accepted the Council of Europe Convention on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), however, violence against women is still a crucial issue, because of deaths caused not only by domestic violence, but also by the so called "honor" killings.

Greek-Turkish Relations

One of the necessary criteria for Turkey's EU accession is to recognize all the European member-states, including the Republic of Cyprus and apply the 'Additional Protocol to the Ankara Association Agreement' to Cyprus."³⁶ Since the invasion and occupation of a third of Cyprus, Turkey not only to refuses officially recognize Cyprus, a full EU member state since 2004, but also in 1983, established the self-declared "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus," which is only recognized by Turkey, bringing Turkish settlers from Anatolia to Cyprus, in an attempt of the Turkish occupied forces to alter decisively the demographics of the occupied northern part of Cyprus. Turkey's refusal to recognize the Republic of Cyprus has led to the international isolation of Northern Cyprus, until Turkey opens the sea ports and airports to Cyprus. Until then, the EU has frozen eight chapters in Turkey's EU accession discussions.

In 2004, the Annan Plan for Cyprus was mainly accepted by the Turks and the Turkish-Cypriots, whereas the majority of the Greek Cypriots rejected it as they felt that the Annan plan for Cyprus satisfied mainly Turkey's demands and the interests of the US, the UK, and Turkey. Some of the major concerns for the Greek-Cypriots were whether the proposed government policy would work effectively at practical level, the impact of the economic development of the occupied part of Cyprus economy to the Greek-Cypriot economy, the fact that there were no guarantees regarding the security of the Greek-

Cypriots, which is related to the issue of the presence of the Turkish settlers on the island, the failure of protecting the Greek-Cypriots' human rights on how to exercise, for example, their profession in Cyprus, the fact that the Greek-Cypriots' properties would be undertaken, which is against to the decisions of the European courts, such as Titina Loizidou's case, the fact that the Republic of Cyprus would have to pay for the compensation of the Greek-Cypriot refugees because its economy is stronger than the economy, creating two competitive economies on the same island, and the fact that all the Turks would be free to move the Greek-Cypriots side, whereas the Greek-Cypriot refugees would not be equally aloud to return to their houses.

As the President of International Co-ordinating Committee "Justice for Cyprus" (PSEKA) in the US, Philip Christopher, said, the agreement of Cyprus on becoming an EU member-state was to solve the Cyprus Problem and Turkey would continue becoming a member-state of the EU, which has not happened yet, because, it is true that [other] European countries, have always been using both Greece and Cyprus, as the reason why Turkey has not joined the EU. However, he explains, the fact that no country has recognized the pseudo-state of the Turks in Cyprus, the fact that the Republic of Cyprus has so many bilateral agreements with the US, the fact that the American companies are developing in the Republic of Cyprus, to all these a significant role has played the Omogeneia in the US and these will help us in the future to solve the Cyprus Problem.³⁷

The President of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades, at his greeting at the event at the Presidential Palace said that "our aim remains Cyprus to be developed as a "normal country," as aptly has the UN Secretary General characterize it, far away from guarantees, far away from intervention rights, far away from the permanent presence of the Turkish settlers in Cyprus."³⁸

Apart from the Cyprus Issues, another important issue for Greek-Turkish relations is the casus belli dispute on Aegean territorial sea borders. As the Professor of International Politics, Dean of the School of International Studies, Communication and Culture at Panteion University of Athens-Greece, and Director of the Center of Eastern Studies, Christodoulos Yiallourides, highlighted that the Greek-Turkish relations are historically rooted back to the Greek revolution and went through the struggles of the Greeks for freedom, which ended in 1922 with the Asia Minor destruction. As he further explained, during the 1950s, the Greek-Turkish relations were defined through the Cyprus Issues, where the Struggles of the Greeks of Cyprus for self-determination and Union with Greece found the British against, who involved Turkey and since then the basic issue of the Greek-Turkish conflict is more related to the Cyprus problem.³⁹

Professor Yiallourides stressed that the Greek-Turkish relations level of conflict was broadened after 1974 to another context of differences, which, as he said, were

discovered by Ankara, in relation to the Aegean Sea and that year was crucial for the Greek-Turkish relations, because Turkey managed to actually fulfill its old plan of occupying Cyprus. As he mentioned, Turkey might not have completely occupied Cyprus – it has occupied the northern part – but tries to control the whole island, through a solution that negotiates the future of Cyprus, under conditions of Turkish suzerain.

After 1974, Professor Yiallourides clarified that Turkey raised issues of Greek-Turkish relations, such as issues discovered in the Aegean Sea and attempted to renew the Treaty of Lausanne, which settles, as he said, perfectly all the issues related to the Aegean Sea, the sovereignty of the Greek islands, the issues of the shelves and air space. In other words, he said that the Treaty of Lausanne determines the legal framework between Greece and Turkey as it was set after 1923; it accords, as it should do, the Greek islands in the Aegean and the Aegean Sea to Greece and recognizes the sovereignty of Turkey in Asia Minor coastline, along with Imvros and Tenedos islands. “Turkey wants and demands to renew the Treaty of Lausanne and to dictate conditions of partition in the Aegean Sea, regarding the undersea and the airspace,” Professor Yiallourides said, explaining that “The relation is problematic when it comes to the Greek sovereignty.”⁴⁰

As Professor Yiallourides underlined, the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, does not simply bring up the issue of the selves and sea sovereignty, but also of inhabited areas; President Erdoğan believes that the areas that are closer to Turkey must be given to Ankara, because Ankara does not recognize the international law as the system that regulates the relations between the countries, but that the proximity of the areas: for instance, Turkey argues that Cyprus is not an independent country, it is close to Turkey, and so it belongs to Turkey and similarly, Turkey considers that the Aegean islands in the southeastern side of Aegean, such as Chios and Mytilini, must be under the Turkish sovereignty.

This is proved by President Erdogan’s words at the 79th anniversary from the death of Ataturk: “Lausanne is a treaty, which along with advantages, has also many losses,” and President Erdogan added that “the submittals that were made with the National Oath was the main reason for the security problems that our country [Turkey] faces on its southern borders today....Those who took us back with the National Oath want us now to leave behind even the Lausanne [Treaty] and take us back to the Treaty of Sèvres. But there is something they do not know: current Turkey is not like the yesterday Turkey,” President Erdogan said.⁴¹

The European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, who participated in the eighth annual Bosphorus Summit on November 28, 2017 in Ankara, Turkey, said that -amongst others- he discussed with President Erdogan his forthcoming meeting on December 7-8, 2017 with the Prime Minister of Greece, Alexis Tsipras and the President of Greece, Prokopis Pavlopoulos in

Athens, which is going to be the first visit of the President of Turkey to Greece in 65 years: “Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hopes that his upcoming visit to Greece will be a catalyst that can further deepen Greek-Turkish ties in all areas” and they “discussed Mr. Erdogan’s forthcoming visit to Athens, the success of which can inaugurate a new era in Greek-Turkish relations, relations that have been tested many times in the past, but which over the last years have clearly improved. They can improve even further in the future, to the benefit of both of our peoples and countries.”⁴²

Turkey’s relations with the EU and US

US-Turkey relations are interrelated with EU-Turkey relations and thus, Turkey’s western future depends on its relationship with the EU and the US. Although the Ottoman Empire was traditionally against Europe, Turkey’s call for joining Europe dates back earlier than the EU and the establishment of modern Turkey, as by the end of the Ottoman Empire, the ruling elite of Constantinople “sought salvation in Westernization,” yet Ottoman reforms based on the European model could not save the empire; Islamic pride and the need for westernization contributed to the creation of a split Ottoman identity in the 19th century.⁴³

The modern Republic of Turkey was established on October 29, 1923, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Its founder was the then army officer Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who became the first President of Turkey. President Atatürk applied a number of reforms, such as industrialization and secularization, restricting the public role of religion - Islam - aiming to Europeanize and Westernize Turkey; changes and alterations were also mandated on language and dressing style.

During World War II, Turkey was neutral until it finally joined the Allies in 1945, without participating in the actual war. Turkey joined the United Nations, participated in the Marshall Plan (1947), and became a member of the Council of Europe (1949), and NATO (1952). Turkey became a close ally of the United States and Western Europe during the Cold War; on September 12, 1963, an Association Agreement was signed between the European Economic Community (EEC) and Turkey. However, Turkey’s relations with Europe and the US have worsened as “Erdogan has been moving away from the West and its NATO allies and has made a point of looking east to Iran and Russia and the Middle East” and Erdogan has been criticized “that Turkey has alienated former Western allies and has become increasingly isolated, and in that sense an improvement of ties with Greece will be welcomed all around.”⁴⁴

Besides, it is not a coincidence that the President of the US, Donald Trump, met with the Prime Minister of Greece, Alexis Tsipras, who was accompanied by the Foreign Minister of Greece, Nikos Kotzias, the Defense Minister of Greece, Panos Kammenos, the Minister for Economy and Development of Greece, Dimitri Papadimitriou, and the

Minister for Digital Policy of Greece, Nikos Pappas, on October 17, 2017 in Washington, to discuss, not only military cooperation, but also US investment in Greece. As reported, "With Turkey's political landscape becoming more volatile after the failed coup attempt in July 2016 against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Germany's call for Turkey's EU hopes ending, Greece could play a more strategic military role for the United States in the Mediterranean and Middle East, as well as North Africa. The meeting comes at a time when US-Turkish relations are at a boiling point. Tensions are rising over a host of issues, including Ankara's warming ties to Russia as it pivots away from the EU and NATO alliance. Recently, the United States and Turkey suspended visa services to each other's countries following the arrest of a US consulate employee."⁴⁵

Positions on Turkey's EU Candidacy

Apart from the issues caused between Cyprus and Turkey, during the opening of other chapters, individual EU member-states expressed reservations with Turkey's EU accession and some of them proposed a "privileged partnership" instead. Great Britain favors Turkey's full membership to the European Union and put pressure on Cyprus to accept the Anna plan. France, Austria, Holland, Germany and Finland have been against Turkey's EU membership. While EU-Turkey relations are not at their best, UK -Turkey relations have remained close.⁴⁶

The former President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, were against Turkey's full EU membership. During the conference of the French governing by that time political party, Union pour un Mouvement Populaire – U.M.P., Nicolas Sarkozy said: "I want to be the friend of Turkey, but I declare that there is no place for Turkey in the EU, just because it is extended to Asia Minor. Turkey must benefit from the privileged partnership status." He also referred to the meaning of the European enlargement: "Before we think of the states that they do not belong to Europe, perhaps we should consider the European countries that belong already to it [Europe]. It is imperative to do so, so that we will not trap ourselves. All the neighbor countries to EU. do not have to join EU. If we enlarge the EU forever, then we will diminish the political union of Europe."⁴⁷

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker at a press conference in Brussels commenting on the EU-Turkey's relations said: "I would like Turkey and us to have the best relations possible but Turkey for the time [being] is stepping away from the European Union, its basic philosophies, its traditions and ambitions.... "That's a choice Turkey has to make, I do think that Turkish authorities are trying to blame the European Union for having broken the enlargement or accession promise;" He also emphasized that "We are not doing that but we want Turkey to re-become European."⁴⁸

Barack Obama stated during his visit to Turkey in 2009 that “The US. firmly supports Turkey’s EU candidacy.” At the same time, he expressed the belief that the Turkish accession would strengthen the European Union.⁴⁹

The former Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, Bernard Kouchner, said that he would no longer support the accession of Turkey in the EU, stressing that he was “extremely shocked” by the Turkish pressures during the process of choosing the Prime Minister of Denmark, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, for the position of the Secretary General of NATO, but then added Turkey, under the US pressures fell back, ensuring many bargains.⁵⁰

The EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, in a written interview with the Turkish newspaper, *Hürriyet Daily News*, stressed that Turkey is a “key partner for Europe and Europe is a key partner for Turkey.” He also said that “Europe and Turkey have a shared history and partnership that goes back several centuries” and that “We are all committed to continue strengthening our partnership and friendship in all its aspects. Turkey has to continue coming closer to the EU and to the EU’s democratic values and rules.”⁵¹

The Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras noted that “It was important for Turkey to remain part of the NATO security alliance and continue its orientation towards Europe despite current tensions between the two countries.”⁵²

Regarding the EU prospect of Turkey, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, Nikos Kotzias, stressed that it is in Greece’s interest for its neighbor country [Turkey] to be a European state. He emphasized that Greece would be the last [country] that would like to stop these discussions.⁵³

The President of Greece, Prokopis Pavlopoulos, at an event where he was declared honorary citizen in Crete mentioned that “we want a democratic and prosperous Turkey that will have a European prospect. But for this it demands from the Turkish side, the total, sincere and in practice respect to the international and the European law. If there isn’t respect to the international law and to the international treaties, primarily to the Treaty of Lausanne and the Law of the Sea according to Montego Bay treaty in 1982, then a real friendship can’t be built.” He further said that “Greece, under its capacity as total member of the European Union, constitutes a power of peace and safety in the Balkans and for the wider region but it is always ready to safeguard and protect its territory and its sovereignty that are also territory and borders of the European Union⁵⁴.

As the Ecumenical Patriarch and Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome, Bartholomew, highlighted, “The European prospect of Turkey encourages our hopes for a better future,” however, as His All-Holiness added “for the moment we have not seen anything specific,” explaining that “Neither the [Greek Orthodox Theological School of]

Halki has reopened, nor the problems with the properties of our Communities, our Churches and our Institutions have been settled, despite the issuance of the new Vakouf law” The Patriarch also said that “Europe always reminds [Turkey] of its duty to respect the minority rights, especially the religious freedoms, to respect generally the human rights.”⁵⁵

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told the BBC that “If the EU, bluntly says, 'We will not be able to accept Turkey into the EU' this will be comforting for us...” adding that “The European Union is not indispensable for us... We are relaxed.” He also said that most of the Turks did not “want the EU anymore” and thought the EU’s approach to Turkey was “insincere,” arguing that “Despite all this we will continue being sincere with the EU for a little more time.” President Erdogan denied that Turkey had jailed 150 journalists, explaining that “only two people with press cards were in prison” and the BBC reported that “Meanwhile, Turkey extended the detention of the local director of Amnesty International and nine others.”⁵⁶

During his visit in London, the Turkish Prime Minister, Binali Yildirim, referred to the European Union and Turkey’s EU accession, “After the Brexit decision the EU is entirely confused. They need to revisit their vision for the future, how far they are going to enlarge and what place Turkey will have in that. We are here. We are not going anywhere.”⁵⁷

Turkey is not in favor of the “special partnership.” Neither do all the Turks support the EU membership. Minorities and certain Turkish politicians, and individuals, like the President of the International Strategic Research Organization (USAK/ISRO), Sedat Laciner support Turkey’s accession to the EU According to Turkish sources, Turkey’s EU membership could be a starting point for a new relationship of Europe with the Muslim countries, at global level. Europe will have accepted a nation, regardless of its religion beliefs, focusing on financial prosperity, the social solidarity of the member-states and the promotion of common interests. The Turkish-Islam model of western governing will also be promoted, including the clear division of politics and religion.

However, not all the Turks, who are in favor of Turkey’s accession to Europe, seem to take into account the point of view of the other Muslim countries, as Islamic countries are not particularly interested in Turkey’s EU candidacy. On the contrary, they see Turkey as a “bridgehead of western values at their territory and they do not approve that. The more Turkey is far away from the West, the better for them....”⁵⁸

Government officers of the Turkish troops disagree with Turkey’s EU membership, as they do not intend to give in their institutional and political interests. Therefore, they oppose Turkey’s EU candidacy. Furthermore, according to an analysis in *Newsweek* magazine, surveys show that the popularity of the European idea in Turkey has lost a great deal of its supporters, reflecting a “tiredness” of the Turkish people due

to Brussel's demands, which is interpreted as reluctance and skepticism on how much finally the EU accession is the question on the economic development and prosperity of the country.⁵⁹

The development of a special partnership with Turkey will be decided if the EU will create an EU Constitution and if a "big" Europe decides to include Turkey in some manner. The development of the EU-Turkish relations will define the European perspective of Turkey. If Turkey's EU accession leads to the creation of a special relationship due to its religion, then the consequences likely will be negative. If Turkey's unsuccessful EU accession is based on Turkey's weakness to fulfill the conditions of entry on which every single candidate country is obliged to satisfy, no matter what its religion is, then the consequences will be restricted.

No matter what kind of relationship will be developed between the EU and Turkey, Great Britain – despite the Brexit – is expected to continue supporting the Turkish EU accession for its own strategic reasons. According to the confidential papers of the British Home Office, which were publicized forty years after the Turkish invasion in Cyprus, in 2004, the future of Cyprus was based on a British "plan" with parameters, to safeguard the British interests – to retain the bases in Cyprus. This plan has been applied to a large extent. As long as Turkey is consistent with the British interests, then Turkey will have British support on issues related to Cyprus and the Aegean. An example of the actual British support towards Turkey was shown through the British contribution to the development of the Annan Plan for Cyprus. Cyprus might not be a British colony any more, however Great Britain continues to exert on Cyprus a policy of predominant superiority.

It is obvious that Turkey is full of loose ends, not just with Europe and the US, but also internally. Turkey faces many internal problems, especially when it comes on human rights protection and the function of democracy. Europe sees Turkey moving away from its European future, as Turkey has been transformed in practice to an authoritarian and Islamic country. Germany, France, and Austria have often expressed, through some of their officials, that they do not wish a full EU membership of Turkey, but rather a special partnership, perhaps according to the "Brexit model" – if it will be proved successful. This, despite the fact that might be desirable by Germany and other EU member-states, it would be perhaps another way for UK-Turkey to continue their plans on Cyprus.

Turkey apparently feels isolated for its positions at European and international level and recently expressed the need to increase the number of "friends" and restrict the number of the "enemies." Recognizing that EU-Turkish relations were conflicting, especially over the last year, especially with Germany, Holland and Belgium, Erdoğan said that Turkey wants to have good relations with the EU, hoping that the fact that the EU and Turkey shared the same opinion on the issue of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, this

would be a reason for improving EU-Turkish relations. It is doubtful that Turkey really wants to join the EU. It seems that Turkey uses its EU candidacy as a diplomatic pawn to get other concession. Besides, Turkey strives to become the “leader” of the Arab countries. A great recent example of Turkey’s attempt to become the leader of the Islamic world is Turkey’s opposition to Israel, when the US, through Trump, recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. The Arab countries do not show any trust towards Turkey, neither show that they want Turkey to lead the way on behalf of the Islamic world. On the contrary, Turkey, through Erdoğan, had been the “mediator” of Israel to recover Israeli-Palestine relations and Israeli-Arab countries in general. The Arab world considered Erdoğan closer to Israel than to them and do not accept Turkey’s leadership in the Arab countries.

US-Turkish relations have also altered. Turkey, the “traditional” ally of the US, cooperates with Russia and Iran and accuses the US of being involved with the failed coup in Turkey, as the US denies that Gülen has any connection to the coup. The US says that Turkey has not provided adequate information to extradite Gülen from the US to Turkey. Turkey has been opposed to the US in a non-diplomatic way by arresting staff working at the US consulate in Constantinople under the accusation that there are connections with Gülen. It also stopped offering full visa services to Americans to which the US responded accordingly in regard to the visa services to the Turks. The US does not show trust to Turkey, although the US tries to deal with Turkey in a diplomatic way, recognizing that US staff might be in danger.

Despite the fact that democratization of Turkey was occurring in theory, and not in real terms, Greece supports Turkey’s EU candidacy, as it is believed that a Europeanized Turkey will be much more preferred than an Islamic Turkey. To this context the first visit of the President of Turkey in 65 years was paid recently to Greece in a period of time that Turkey had been isolated for its positions from other countries. Greece hopes by acting as it does that Turkey will finally respect international and European law, including the Lausanne Treaty, and therefore the status quo in the Aegean Sea. Cyprus hoped that by joining the EU, it would put pressure on Turkey to recognize the Republic of Cyprus. Cyprus will block Turkey’s EU candidacy until Turkey applies the ‘Additional Protocol to the Ankara Association Agreement’ to Cyprus. Realizing that Turkey all these years continues not to comply with the European framework and not to recognize the Republic of Cyprus, the question that arises is whether Cyprus should try figure an alternative way that would solve the Cyprus problem. Taking into account that Turkey’s position as a western ally has been weakened, and that Cyprus, along with Greece, have managed to become allies with countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel, that have closer ties with the US and not in the same way as with Turkey. This might prove useful as a “tool” of pressure for Turkey to improve Greek and Cypriot relations with Turkey.

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