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Turkey' s Prospects of Accession to the European Union

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Turkey's Prospects of Accession to the European Union

“The West has always been prejudiced against the Turks, but we Turks have always been consistently moved towards the West.” Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Turkey historically has been geographically, politically, militarily, and economically linked to Europe since the days of the Ottoman Empire. Despite the Turkish decline of power after World War I, the new Turkish Republic and the Young Turks saw to it that Turkey regained its position of a regional power within a relatively short period of time. The end of World War II marked the beginning of the Cold War and Europe's marked interest in Turkey. Geographically Turkey was strategically and militarily interesting and important to Europe for the protection of its “soft underbelly” from communist military forces during the Cold War. Additionally, Europe looked to the young Turkish labor force and actively recruited Turks to be *gastarbeiter* and help rebuild Germany and other countries.

Since its Associate Member status to the European Economic Community in 1964, Turkey has eagerly waited and pursued a path for inclusion into European society. Such a move would establish their equality into a group they feel they have always been historically linked to; however, despite a “membership” that has transcended over 40 years, most Europeans and their respective governments seem unwilling to share this point of view or be receptive to the prospectus of Turkish accession into the European Union.

Now the Turks must decide where is the soul of Turkey? Where is the future soul of Turkey? Is it in Europe or in Asia? More importantly, both Europeans and Turks need to ask themselves, should Turkey become a member of the European Union?

This article seeks to answer the final question by analyzing both sides of the argument and highlighting the concerns and benefits of Turkish accession to the European Union. The article will conclude with the *de facto* principles that guide this process in a way that is contradictory to logic, and political policy recommendations for accession.

The idea of a unified Europe emerged in the 1950s out of the hope that an economic and political union would provide the long lasting peace that had eluded the continent for so long. The genesis for this union took place in the 1951 Treaty of Paris, which founded the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and in the Treaty of Rome signed in 1957, which created the European Economic Community (EEC). The ECSC and EEC were founded by Belgium, France, Germany (West), Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The first enlargement took place in 1973 with the incorporation of Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. That was followed by subsequent enlargements in 1981 with the addition of Greece and the two Iberian countries; Portugal and Spain in 1986.

At that time this “union” was known as the EEC and the creation of the European Union *per se*, did not take place until 1991 in Maastricht, Netherlands with the signing of the Treaty on European Union. This treaty brought about the “current” European Union (EU), which in essence was a framework that brought together under one umbrella all the different political institutions and established a single monetary unit: the euro. After the birth of the EU, trade barriers within the member states were removed, and the free movement of the new European citizens and labor between member states was authorized.

The Nordic countries of Sweden and Finland joined in the EU in 1995 and in 2004, ten other European countries became new members to this international body. Cyprus, Czech Repub-

lic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia were the second to last members to accede into the EU. However, their welcome into the EU was somewhat controversial and set the tone for a critical look at future expansion efforts of the EU. Even the admission of Bulgaria and Rumania in 2007 has met some resistance on the part of the “older” EU member states, and the prospectus of Turkey acceding has countered even more resistance.

“The EU is now the largest political and economic partnership in the world accounting for 38% of free trade. With free movement of goods, services, and people for its 450 million citizens, the EU provides opportunities for everyone.”^[1]

Keeping with this point, one would expect to find the situation in the EU as one characterized by prosperity and welcoming to all European peoples. The encouragement offered by the European Council in 1993 for countries to join this regional organization was primarily met with great enthusiasm. At the time the EU counted only 12 member states, and since the announcement of the “Copenhagen Criteria,” 15 other countries have joined the ranks of the EU.

In June 1993, the European Council in Copenhagen stated accession would take place once the candidate countries can “assume the obligations of membership by satisfying the economic and social conditions.”^[2] To fulfill the economic and social conditions set forth by the “Copenhagen Criteria,” each prospective state must have:

- Possession of stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities.
- The existence of a functioning economy, and the capacity to cope with competitive pressures within the EU.
- The ability to adopt in full the *acquis communautaire*, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.^[3]

These conditions were chosen in an effort to extend stability and prosperity to member states and make Europe safer, in addition to stimulating the economic and social reforms in new member states to attract foreign investment. Candidate countries were assured the EU would assist in this process in the form of pre-accession assistance, in an effort to help them integrate and accede to the union.

However, the enlargement/accession process has not been as welcoming as one would expect and candidate countries and potential candidate countries have been subject to policies that have hindered or lengthened the process of accession.

To this end, countries such as Croatia, Turkey, and Macedonia have implemented political reforms to meet the accession requirements. Bulgaria and Rumania have successfully met (*to a certain extent*) the criteria to join the EU, and Croatia seems almost certain to follow in these footsteps and join as “the next country on the list,”^[4] according to EU Enlargement Commissioner Ollie Rehn. However Turkey seems to be purposefully left out and hindered in its accession talks with the EU.

Turkey's European credentials were never questioned during the Cold War; therefore, it was originally viewed in a favorable light in 1987 when it applied for full membership to the EEC and in 1999 when it officially became an EU candidate. However, many things have changed in last couple of years. The EU attitude towards Turkish accession as of late can best be described by former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing when he proclaimed Turkey has “a different culture, a different approach, and a different way of life. It is not a European country”; in essence, an EU with Turkey in it would signal “the end of Europe,”—“*finalité Européenne*.”^[5]

Although not too many people would wholeheartedly agree with Giscard d'Estaing many Europeans would currently agree that having Turkey in the Union is problematic for Europe. Among the many factors that now make European governments and Europeans weary of sharing a Union with Turkey are: demographics, religion, immigration, human rights issues, enlargement fatigue, the Cyprus issue, and the economic impact Turkey might have on the EU.

Turkey can be described as a "large, poor, secular-but-Muslim nation of 72 million people"[\[6\]](#) and its accession to the Union would make its population one of the largest and fastest growing in Europe, and this presents a problem for most Europeans. Despite Turkey's declining birth rate, Turkey's population will reach over eighty million by 2015, thereby accounting for 14 percent of the total EU population, and possibly surpassing Germany's.[\[7\]](#) The main problem with the large population of Turkey is that if the poverty level remains the same or increases, then the poverty will stimulate massive immigration from Turkey to the other EU countries.[\[8\]](#) Furthermore, politicians fear that with its large Muslim population, Turkey will make the European Union more heterogeneous and, therefore the European Union would not be able to continue to build a closer political union and speak with single voice.[\[9\]](#)

Additionally, Turkey is a 99 percent Muslim country. This fact is one that clashes with Europeans, since most of the EU is Christian (Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox). Resentment over terrorist incidents, Muslim protests over the cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad, and problems with Muslim integration in Europe have caused many concerns and willingness from Europeans to object to Turkey's accession. Islam is currently growing in Europe and has already surpassed Judaism as the number two religion in that continent. In essence, what Europeans fear from Turkey's Muslim population is that "political Islam, making full use of the democratic system and unrestrained by a military establishment diminished in its influence, could come to power in Turkey and thereby gain control of an important European Union member state."[\[10\]](#)

Public fears of a mass Muslim flood of "poorly-educated immigrants"[\[11\]](#) has intensified negative public opinion towards Muslim Turkish immigrants. The possibility of implementing the chapter of free movement of peoples, in regards to Turkey has led to "fears of uncontrolled and massive [Turkish] migration, in particular in . . . Austria and Germany."[\[12\]](#) This is evident in opinion polls that suggest that in France, Greece and Cyprus opponents to Turkish membership make up two-thirds of the population and Austria's public opinion oscillates around 80 percent.[\[13\]](#)

In essence, Turkey's accession to the Union would make it "the largest member, with the most votes in the Council of Ministers and the most seats in the European Parliament."[\[14\]](#) Many Europeans believe that "as a Muslim country, Turkey has no place in the future of the EU."[\[15\]](#) Common citizen's cultural perceptions is one of Turkey and Islam championing their own interests in the EU, and fear an inclusion of Turkey will lead Europe towards becoming what the majority of Europeans would dread: "Eurabia."

Some of the principles and characteristics of the EU have been the respect of democracy, rule of law, fight against corruption, and the protection of minority and human rights. All members are required to abide by these principles, however, Turkey has had some issues with minority and human rights abuses and the EU has been quick to point them out and scrutinize them.

Turkey's history has been plagued with *coup d'états*, human rights abuses, suppression of women and minority Kurds, and even an alleged "genocide" against Armenians. Turkish laws until recently even permitted capital punishment. Currently, Turkey has on the books a penal code that limits free speech and criminalizes any perceived insults against "Turkish-

ness.” Recent applications of such laws against the 2006 Nobel Laureate in Literature, Orhan Pamuk, have been criticized internationally and within the EU. Furthermore, the government’s regulation and control of all Islamic institutions has excluded financially and even oppressed socially religious minorities such as Christians and Jews.

In 2006, the draft European Commission report, highly criticized Ankara for allegations of human rights abuses, military involvement in politics, and the lack of rights for women, Kurds, religious minorities, and trade unions. The European Commission said it would intensify the monitoring of these criteria and any infringement could lead to suspension of membership talks.^[16] Interesting to note that although the report is sharp in pointing out deficiencies, it fails to make any recommendations on how to deal with these issues and help the accession process.

Currently, the “mood in Europe is more hostile than ever to further EU enlargement.”^[17] More expansion for the European Union equates to more weakness, and EU citizens are “against Turkish membership and indeed many are worried about the impact of . . . their jobs and living standards.”^[18]

During the enlargement periods of the EU after 1995, member states were somewhat unwelcoming to newer states due to the perceived problems they might bring to the EU. The effects on the often discussed budget are one of the main concerns and factors that make current members reluctant to accept new ones. At the base of this argument is the fact that up until 1995, most of the countries that acceded into the union had a higher GDP than the ten member states that joined since then. This in itself posed a problem since poorer states would require more money to close the social and economic disparities than the current members needed, and in addition with a finalized membership would create “crowding costs”^[19] in the EU budget.

Furthermore, enlargement of the Union would lead to a situation where it “increases decision and transaction costs: administrative cost rise, communication becomes more cumbersome, and expenses . . . increase disproportionately.”^[20] Since close to 80 percent of the EU budget goes to agriculture and regional subsidies,^[21] and because Turkey is less developed than the older member states and has a large agricultural sector, then in turn it would usurp a larger portion of the budget. Therefore, the current and future EU negotiations on accession are, and will be characterized by tough bargaining including threats to block or delay enlargement.^[22]

The possible accession of Turkey is thought to create even more economic problems and heterogeneity for the EU than that of the twelve most recent member states.^[23] It will create “even more intense distributional conflict in the enlarged EU with its more pronounced economic cleavages and budgetary constraints.”^[24] Therefore, the European Commission made negotiations on the types of agreements subject to political conditions and caveats for Turkey. One reason for this type of treatment for Turkey is due to the thought that once Turkey is in the EU, it will divert EU funding from the new countries and diminish their status in the European Communities Pillar of the EU. Just like the EU-15 members with the last accession, the 2004 EU-10 members are now focusing on not losing relative power and going against part of the liberal ideals of the EU; expansion of wealth and prosperity.

In 1964 fighting broke-out between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots on the nascent island and country of Cyprus. In 1974 after a Greek-Cypriot *coup d'état*, Turkish forces intervened in the island to protect the Turkish-Cypriot minority and have not left since. The northern part of Cyprus declared unilateral independence in 1983 under the name of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and Turkey is the only country to recognize this *de facto*

state and the TRNC is its protectorate. Internationally only the southern part of the island, the Republic of Cyprus is politically recognized and is also a member of the EU. Currently Northern Cyprus is considered EU territory under Turkish occupation, and has remained economically and politically isolated from the world.

The division of the Cypriot island is a major point of contention for Turkey and the EU, particularly with the Republic of Cyprus. Because Turkey has not opened its ports to Cypriot vessels, it is deemed as not abiding by the customs union agreement which in 2005 included all the 10 newer EU countries. The European Commission and EU Enlargement Commissioner Ollie Rehn have called for the un-delayed Turkish response to its obligations under the 2005 Ankara Agreement. Abdullah Gül, Turkey's Foreign Minister reply to the European Commission's demands to open Turkish ports to Cypriot ships was "We will not do it!"^[25] This response was due to the EU lack of fulfillment of their own promises to end the Turkish-Cypriot embargo. Overtly, the Republic of Cyprus has blocked a sovereign decision taken by the EU prior to Cyprus' accession, to block €259 million destined to aid the Turkish-Cypriots.

The European Commission's response to Turkey was to "freeze" eight chapters, primarily ones dealing trade and the internal market, of Turkey's membership negotiations due to their intransigence in opening their ports to Cyprus.^[26] Until Turkey complies with the Ankara Agreement which opens all ports to all EU members, Cyprus will use the EU veto to block the opening of any new chapter in the accession negotiations.^[27]

As a result of such a harsh and hypocritical stance the EU has taken, currently two-thirds of Turks opined they would rather suspend EU membership talks than give ground over Cyprus, according to the International Strategic Research Organization.^[28]

Besides peace as one of the founding EU principles, economic integration and growth are also at its forefront. Since the EU's adoption of the euro as its official currency in 2002, the EU has enjoyed an economic growth and strength that was not predicted; however, enlargement strains have at times hindered this prosperity. Keeping with this point, is another reason why some in Europe are skeptical of further enlargement, and particularly one which would involve the Turkish economy.

The Turkish economy, suffered a massive financial crisis in 2001. This crisis led to a fall of Turkish GDP by 7.5 percent, shot up interest rates with some reaching 400 percent, and led to a large currency devaluation and public debt soaring to above 90 percent of GDP.^[29] The total cost of the 2001 crisis to the Turkish economy was \$50 billion. The Turkish economy has not fully recovered yet. A public debt and a government budget deficit that oscillates around 75-80 percent continue to prove this. An unemployment rate of 10 percent is also compounding the problem.^[30] Bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption seem to be some of the main reasons for the current economic suffering.

Because of Turkey's relatively weak economy, accession by the Turkish State would result in the "lowering of average economic standards in the Union, making the EU as a whole poorer and raising demands on richer states."^[31] Additionally, the cost of Turkish accession to the EU will be high: with full political integration, it is estimated at around \$25 billion per annum.^[32] It is not surprising then, that current EU member countries would not want to pay such a high cost.

In an effort to meet the "Copenhagen Criteria," Turkey has implemented massive reforms in its judicial and economic system to better its institutions. A large number of constitutional amendments have taken place and legislature to abolish capital punishment, reform the penal system, and the protection of human rights has been enacted. Additionally, the polemic State

Security Courts that were notorious for human rights violations were completely eliminated. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has implemented and seen through “constitutional changes that reduced the role of the military in the political arena and redrew the country’s penal code,”[\[33\]](#) in an effort to embrace the democratic values of the EU. These reforms have effectively, abolished the death penalty, taken action against police torture, and changed the constitution to curb the influence of the military in government. Additionally, the current reform packages and new legislature have increased women’s rights, outlawed abuse against women and children.

Despite the negativity that has plagued the accession process and is highlighted in the first part of this paper, there are real and tangible benefits to Turkey becoming a member of the EU. Even though the European Commission froze eight chapters, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Finland were against suspending parts of the negotiation process.

EU membership would benefit Turkey in that “for the modern Islamist government, it offers protection against military intervention. For the army it guarantees secularism. For business, it entrenches market reform. For Kurds, it promises minority rights.”[\[34\]](#) Europe loses if Turkey is not admitted to the Union. The prospect of blackballing a “moderate Muslim country that has provided NATO with its second largest army would destroy its reputation in the Muslim world.”[\[35\]](#)

By accepting Turkey into what has been called a “Christian Club,” the EU has the opportunity to showcase to Muslim countries that democracy and Islam are compatible. Having Turkey in the Union would be essential in projecting diplomatic influence in the Middle East, an area in which the EU has relatively no influence. Furthermore, this would change the negative views most Muslims have of the EU and to a certain extent decrease the perception of the West as being anti-Islamic; a perception that fuels many terrorist acts.

Turkey’s geopolitical strategic location can also be an asset to the EU in dealing with post-Soviet Turkic states, and because of Turkey’s shared cultural and historical traits with these republics, it in turn could open new markets for EU goods. Additionally, the EU would have direct access to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and could therefore diversify its energy dependencies.

European politicians especially French, Austrian, and German have argued that Turkey’s politics would not run parallel to the EU’s. Christian Democrats have even argued that because “Turkey did not participate in the enlightenment and share Europe’s philosophical and religious traditions it should be excluded” from the Union.[\[36\]](#) According to them, the lack of heterogeneity the Turks would bring to the EU would “prevent” the EU from speaking with one voice; however, this seems to be inaccurate.

Currently, the EU seeks to be a counterweight to the sole international hegemon, the United States. However, in order to exert power and to be in power, one must have a strong military/defense, and this is clearly not the case with the EU. The EU’s defense is reliant, almost exclusively, upon NATO. Much to its dismay, the European Union defense is not completely ensured by NATO. Since the United States is the largest member of NATO and not an EU member, a coordinated EU military response or exertion of power without the United States would leave essentially a much smaller number of military forces to do so. However, with Turkey were in the EU, the EU’s European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) could count on the Turkish Armed Forces to provide over one million troops and strategically desired bases. Moreover, Turkey is already in line with EU foreign policy, as is evident by stationing Turkish peace operations troops in European countries such as Bosnia, Croatia, Kosova, and Macedonia. Turkey is also active in Afghanistan and has provided a large contingent of

forces to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Lebanon; all activities that count with EU backing.

An economically powerful but politically isolated Turkey could prove to be very dangerous for the EU. Such isolation could push Turkey to find alliances with other states such as Russia, Iran, or Pakistan. An alliance with the latter two, could develop into a “crescent of influence and power” linking semi-militaristic Islamic states from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea and possibly make Turkey’s foreign policy clash with EU interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.[\[37\]](#)

In regards to the Cyprus problem, the Republic of Cyprus erroneously thinks that by threatening to block Turkey’s accession process to the EU, Turkey will capitulate and resolve the issue. However, this issue will never be resolved with Turkey outside the EU. Since there are “no borders” in the European Union, if Turkey were to accede to the European Union, then the border between Northern Cyprus (or the TRNC) and the Republic of Cyprus would in theory disappear thus, providing an end (*albeit in a simplified manner*) to the island’s division. This in turn would meet the criteria and goals, after some relatively minor political maneuvering, of both Turkey and Cyprus. On one hand, the end of the Turkish-Cypriot embargo would take place, and allow trade to transpire with the Northern Cyprus, thus meeting the Turkish demands. Moreover, this would in turn make Turkey implement its obligations under the Ankara Agreement and thus open its port to a country that has Turks as its citizens; the Republic of Cyprus.

It is in the best interest of all the parties involved to see Turkey as an EU member if this dispute is going to be resolved in the near future, for “. . . Turkey’s accession to the EU would see the island’s division brought to an end.”[\[38\]](#)

Economically speaking, Turkey can benefit Europe which has a declining birth rate, and the prospectus of having a large and young Turkish labor force would help their failing and ever burdening social pension plans. Presently, the Turkish economy is growing by 6-7 percent[\[39\]](#) per year and seems to be recovering from its previous financial crisis. The start of EU accession negotiations has showed its immediate impact on the once fragile Turkish economy, by increasing foreign investment in Turkey. It is estimated that foreign direct investment reached upwards of \$5 billion in 2005.[\[40\]](#) Likewise, Austrian banks and French carmakers are benefiting from Turkey’s emergent economy. Its growing economy has helped it become a major magnet for European trade and investment. Turkey is one of Europe’s biggest trading partners and its growing population would provide Europe with a vast work force and large consumer base for EU goods.

Although a greater and stronger EU is what the older member states desire, the possibilities of expansion, especially with a Muslim country, in it signify an encroachment on the relative power each country has within a smaller EU. To that end, it is fair to say that the realist approach which is one to “preserve and defend their privileged position”[\[41\]](#) comes into play by the EU members and that is also one of the factors that will impede Turkish accession.

“Unwilling to admit that they want to keep Turkey out, Austria, Cyprus, France, and the Netherlands are making demands that seem designed to induce the Turks to walk away.”[\[42\]](#) By setting up new barriers and demands the EU is creating a tense situation which could lead to negative consequences for both parties.

Austria is one of the most outspoken leaders against Turkey. Austria as a remnant of the Christian Habsburg and Austro-Hungarian Empires that fought the Ottoman Empire in past centuries, seems to have a rivalry that has not passed in the memory of many Austrians.

France is another country that has publicly opposed Turkey's accession. Due to the 2005 civil riots with Muslim youths, the anti-Islamic sentiment in that country has solidified, and an inclusion of 70 million Turkish Muslims in the EU that would eventually have access to live in France does nothing to improve their view of Turkish accession.

Both Austria and France have called on Turkey to recognize their involvement in the "Armenian Genocide" of 1915-1917. The French Parliament has even passed a law making it a crime in the EU to deny the Turkish responsibility for the Armenia genocide, in an effort to embarrass Ankara and possibly put another obstacle in Turkey's path.

Furthermore, in France voters "passed an amendment to their constitution saying all EU membership deals after 2007 must be voted on by referendum."^[43] What this means for Turkey, is that even if all the accession process is positive, without a positive French vote Turkey would not be able to accede to the Union, and that French vote would be at the hands of the French citizenry; the citizenry that currently opposes it membership by more than two-thirds.^[44]

Such blatant moves to impede Turkish accession, compounded by the German Chancellor's (*among others*) tough stance on the Cyprus issue, the negative publicity Turkey and its citizens get in the EU press, and criticisms regarding its laws and reform process, has diminished the desire of average Turks to join the EU.

According to Egemen Bağış, a senior advisor to Prime Minister Erdoğan, "if the European leaders want reforms to continue in Turkey, if they want their safety to be assured in an unstable region, if they want to assure an alternative energy supply, then they should show us some encouragement."^[45]

Presently, there is fear that the troublesome accession talks are pushing Turkey further away from the West. In 2004, Turkish support for the joining the EU was at two-thirds approval (67.5%), but now it is presently at one-third (32.2%); moreover, over 75 percent of Turks believe they will never be let in the EU, and only 7.2 percent of Turks trust the EU.^[46] This in essence has sadly and understandably, led to voices of "Euro-skepticism" and "Euro-vilification" making their way to mainstream Turkish society.^[47]

In an effort to see Turkey become a member of the EU, a move which is in the best economic, political, and military interests, both parties must work together to surpass this current impasse. The EU bears most of the responsibility for complicating the accession process however. This is evident in that the majority of the hurdles facing Turkey come from the negative public opinion ordinary citizens and politicians have towards Turkey. One possible explanation for this anti-Turkish mentality is that EU citizens feel they have a shared identity, by their philosophy, culture, literature, religion, and shared experiences, and do not feel that is something shared with the Turks. However, whether the differences are societal or cultural, Europeans cannot deny that historically Turkey has been tied to Europe in one way or another.

Despite these differences in opinion, the EU must be fair and set attainable standards for new country accession. If the problem is Turkish accession, then politicians, instead of starting with the problems of expansion, should criticize only Turkey's accession directly and cease the ambiguity with which they deal with this issue. The EU in turn would be wise in removing unfair stumbling blocks and avoid adding new barriers; barriers that the international community can clearly see are aimed at obstructing Turkey in this process. Finally, the EU must deal with this expansion issue in a fair manner if it is to maintain credibility in its "Copenhagen Criteria" and its commitment to EU enlargement.

On the other hand, Turkey needs to be more assertive and independent in its dealings with the EU. It is clear they are losing the “public relations war” with the EU; therefore, Turkey needs to use public diplomacy and other outlets to highlight the progress Turkey has achieved in political reforms and the benefits to the EU if Turkey accedes. The Turkish government needs to continue to push towards more progress and the agreed-upon reforms if it is to succeed in its parts of the process.

One can safely say that in light of the current attitudes and obstacles put before Turkey in its EU accession process, the likelihood that it will in fact join the Union seem minimal at best. Notwithstanding, support from some countries, including Greece its longtime rival, the voices of opposition have clearly turned the European public sentiment against Turkey. Even though the Greek Prime Minister, Costas Karamanlis has stated that a “European Turkey is in everyone’s interest,”^[48] it is highly doubtful that such statements will reverse the course the “old EU” governments of France, Germany, and Austria have embarked upon.

Turkey seems to be schizophrenic, it thinks its friends are in Europe and its enemies are in Asia, when it is the other way around. Despite all the reforms implemented by Turkey, all the progress towards meeting the “Copenhagen Criteria”, and all the concessions, the Turkish leadership needs to realize its *real* chances of accession. Turkey needs to project a reasonable prediction of its accession possibilities and not rely exclusively on EU membership for its future.

Despite a hypothetical, although very realistic, negative result in the EU accession, the whole accession process has helped transform the political, judicial, and economic development of Turkey. Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that, “we are aware that we shall have a long way to go. Indeed, our own performance shall determine how long this process will take. And I am not totally unhappy with this fact. For I attach importance to the quality involved in this road, rather than the distance.”^[49] As Prime Minister Erdoğan highlighted, Turkey is benefiting from this process and if the Turkish State accomplishes all the reforms and harmonization requirements, then rejecting Turkish membership will be a very costly mistake to the EU. On the contrary, although it would also hurt Turkey to a certain extent, the accession process, done with the help of European monies, would have created the foundation for Turkey it seek opportunities elsewhere, thus putting Turkey in a position that its losses would be far less than those of the EU. Such a positive outlook is essentially what is needed during this period of accession, since looking at the benefits this process has helped create for Turkey is wise, considering the predominant feeling that “the EU will never accept a Muslim country.”^[50]

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