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EU AND TURKEY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN ENLARGEMENT AND FOREIGN POLICY

The recent phase of EU enlargement was a substantial one that influenced the internal structure and main policies of the EU. However it seems that it does not correspond to a final determination of the borders of the EU. The EU-25 will become the EU-27 in 2007 and subsequently may reach a membership of 28 and even more countries. Within this context the membership prospect of Turkey looms in the horizon, in the next 10 to 15-year perspective of the EU. It is an unprecedented challenge for the EU because accession of Turkey involves multi-faceted issues such as economic development gaps, cultural differences, political problems and issues related to the size and population of Turkey. Only recently after the decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey in the December 17 2004 European Council, one of the leading countries of the EU France announced that it will hold a referendum before Turkey's probable accession to the EU. In Austria almost all political camps oppose Turkey's membership. Thus Turkey's accession to the EU stirs up a whole gamut of reactions. Opponents reject membership on cultural, economic or political grounds.

It should be emphasized that relations with Turkey date back to the application for an association in 1959. The Helsinki European Council declared Turkey to be a candidate country and the decision to open accession negotiations was taken in December 2004. This creates a trajectory of progress albeit slow in the relations. The EU has displayed its political will to integrate Turkey and in return Turkey has demonstrated its will to join by the extensive reforms it has carried out to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria. Thus in the case

of Turkey it may be possible to observe a concurrence between the aims of enlargement and foreign policy objectives of the EU, especially concerning the aim of widening the zone of stability, democracy and prosperity that the EU stands for. The stabilizing and democratizing effect of the promise of EU membership was a vital strategy in the EU's policy towards Turkey.

EU policy towards Turkey is also extremely vital regarding the determination of the borders of the EU and the future identity of the EU. Turkey lies in the dimly-lit zone between the future members and forever neighbors of the EU. For some it should be a 'special associate of the EU' rather than a full candidate. Thus whether EU's borders will take in Turkey or leave it out speaks volumes regarding the future identity of the EU and its member states.

Turkey's accession is a complicated and multi-faceted issue regarding the enlargement process of the EU. The methodology of the negotiations, the difficult nature of especially some chapters such as agriculture, free movements of workers and structural funds are all important determinants of the effectiveness of EU enlargement towards Turkey. However the success of EU policy towards Turkey does not only depend on the EU side. Turkey's perseverance in the reform process and its ability to adapt to EU rules and norms is critical for the success of that phase of enlargement. Turkey's success in reform is in turn not totally independent of global and regional developments such as the U.S. intervention into Iraq.

In this session we will discuss the implications of Turkey's accession in terms of the EU's enlargement and foreign policy. Turkey's accession to the EU will influence the balance of power among the member states, the main policies of the EU such as agriculture and structural policy, and the basic identity formation process within the Union. For the first time, the EU will be receiving a member that has a predominantly Muslim population. It will mean the addition of 70 million Muslims to the already existing Moslem population within the EU which is about 15 million. This prospect may cause anxiety within EU member states since it would constitute a challenge to a cultural

understanding of European identity based on the values and symbols of Christianity. Turkey may represent a threat to European identity, way of life, and values. It is possible to discern that historical and cultural notions of 'otherness' that serve to distinguish the European' from the 'non-European' also underlies the present attitude to Turkey.

While Turkey's membership is being discussed with reference to cultural and religious factors, one important issue needs to be emphasized: Turkey is a secular country. This version of secularism is inspired by the French *laïcisme* i.e. a strict separation of religious and state affairs. However, it is different than other secular countries in that there is not only a separation between the state and religion but in fact the latter is under the control of the former. Here it should be noted that inclusion of Turkey to the process of European integration as a predominantly Muslim and secular country would constitute a European solution to one of the most prominent global problems at the dawn of the 21st century: Islam can co-exist with democracy and secularism. It is not only a global message but also one that pertains to the immigrant populations that form a sizeable minority in several EU states.

Despite the challenge and the prospect of reconciliation with diversity that Turkey's accession may bring, both Turkey and the EU are likely to experience incompatibilities and adaptation problems. Turkey's sizeable agricultural sector, unemployment, regional disparities, social and economic problems may complicate Turkey's adaptation to the EU and diminish the EU's capacity to absorb Turkey. In this regard, it should be mentioned that Turkey's membership will only take place after the successful conclusion of negotiations. By then Turkey will have completed the alignment of its legal system with the *acquis communautaire*. Imperfections in implementation may create a problem in the successful alignment of Turkey with EU norms and rules. In this regard substantial aid and assistance should come from the EU within the framework of financial and technical programs.

The political and security related aspects of Turkey's integration constitute a particularly critical area of investigation. Being a NATO member it may be rightly said

that Turkey is already well-integrated into the European security architecture. The creation of the ESDP and the use of NATO assets by the EU for its security and defense operations created some controversies between Turkey and the EU member states. The membership of Cyprus without a successful settlement of the division of the island was resolved by a declaration annexed to the Presidency conclusions of the December 2002 Copenhagen European Council, suspending the participation of Cyprus and Malta in EU military operations conducted using NATO assets. Turkey may also be a strategic partner and important member state in future military or civilian operations that the EU may instigate in the future. In this sense Turkey's geographic location adjacent to such regions as the Balkans, Caucasus, Mediterranean and the Middle East may prove to be an asset rather than a liability for an effective ESDP. Turkey's recent support to the Annan plan for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem was an important sign that Turkish foreign policy orientation was being radically transformed. The TGNA's rejection of the motion regarding the use of Turkish territory as a base for incursions into Iraq by the US army was also generally perceived as a further Europeanization of Turkey's foreign policy. According to the general mood in the EU such a policy realignment should be followed up by further moves such as the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border.

The fact that Turkey is situated in a tough neighborhood is also a reason for concern in some EU circles. Since Turkey shares borders with unstable and problematic countries such as Iran, Iraq and Syria, a probable Turkish membership to the EU will carry the EU's borders as far as the Middle East. Such a development may be perceived as a strategic vulnerability. It may also lead to an extension in the geographical reach of the EU, an integration project extending from the Atlantic to the Middle East. Thus Turkey's membership may foster the 'global actorness' potential of the EU by contributing not only to an increase in size and scope but also to the ideal of a multicultural Europe.